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WOWEE KAZOWIE!

Wm. NEVILLE
& S. DE LAROSA

WOWEEKAZOWIEDITORIAL!

Okay, here we are with the second issue of WOWEEKAZOWIE!, and in keeping with our policy of a rotating editorship, yours truly is responsible for this offering.

But before I tell you a little bit about this issue, we at WOWEE want to thank everyone who decided to try our first issue, and make it the unqualified success it was. Thank you, friends, and we hope you agree that WOWEE deserves a place in Fandom.

I think our regular staff members (co-publishers all) have gotten together some pretty exciting things this time around, and because of that, we've upped our page count to 36. And, may I add, without raising our price. While it may appear that we have, indeed we have not, as our $1 tag this issue includes postage and therefore works out the same for you as last issue's 75¢ plus 25¢ postage.

Willie Blyberg brings us the second part of his VICTORY strip, the third and final chapter which will be coming your way next issue. Our third issue, by the way, will be edited by Pete Iro, who aside from doing our cover this time around, offers an interesting dissertation on Jack Kirby. Kim Thompson turns his hand to something different this issue with a review of Mark Gruenwald's "A Treatise on Reality in Comic Literature." Mark has produced what I feel is the finest piece of comic orientated literature I've ever encountered; TORICL is a masterful scientific study. Yet as you will find out in Kim's review, it's not for everyone so check out page 24 and see for yourself.

Plus...more goodies. In particular, "A Conversation with Don McGregor." Whether or not one is a great fan of Don's writing, this interview is important to all as it sheds some light on a side of the Bullpen we rarely, if ever get to see. Told from his unique vantage point, Don's story is something I think every fan should be aware of.

Personally I feel Don has done more for the cause of progressive and literary comic books--the offering of viable and interesting alternatives for the older readers--than any other person in the medium. Don is, in brief, a writer I admire, and a man I love. Check this out because there's a distinction between the two terms. As a writer I admire him for his talent and determination to bring a new dimension to comics; as a man I find him to be one of the warmest, most generous and fascinating persons I've known. And I'd like to take the time here, in print, to thank him... for his talent, his friendship, and just simply: for himself. And it's for this reason that this second issue of WOWEEKAZOWIE! is dedicated with gratitude and much appreciation to Mr. Donald Frances McGregor.

Turning to other matters, if you're as interested in quality zines as I am, then I urge you to check out NIMBUS, a newspaper-sized zine available from its editor, Frank Lovece, at 947 Maple Drive, #15, Morgantown, West Virginia 26505. The second issue of NIMBUS, featuring among other things interviews with Don McGregor and--believe it or not--God (this one by the only person I know who'd dare attempt such a thing: Peter Gillis), is still available for only 75¢ (postage included). The third issue will feature articles by Frank, Archie Goodwin, Tony Isabella, Ralph Macchio, Mark Gasper and others. It's a first class zine so check it out and don't forget, tell Frank I sent you.

Before I conclude and give way to the contents of our issue, no editorial would be complete without a number of thank-yous, and here are mine: a warm thanks to Bill Neville and Sam de la Rosa for the simply indescribable frontespiece seen on the opposite page; to Mark Pacella and Tim Corrigan for their fine, fine artwork; to Steve Crane for coming thru with some much needed, and excellent logos; and to Mark Gruenwald for being ready, willing and especially able when it was needed.

And also, special thanks to Gasper the Great, a nondescript character who thinks his real name is Mark Gasper; to Don McGregor again; and last yet most important of all, to my wife, Sue, who goddamn it, put up with me not only through getting this issue together, but who does so 365 days a year. Thanks Sue, and thanks everyone.

Finally, I would appreciate that all LOCs on this issue be sent directly to myself: Dean Mullaney, 703 Katan Avenue, Staten Island, N.Y. 10312 (tel. 212-948-3890). Thanks, and enjoy.

DEAN MULLANEY

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This issue's guest letterer.....Steve Crane

WOWEEKAZOWIE! is published and (c) its contributors.

Published quarterly. #2, Fall, 1976 issue. Editor: Dean Mullaney. $1.00 (postage included) per copy, sent book-rate mail. $2.00 for three-issue subscription. Publishing address: William A. Blyberg, 68 Alcott Street, Acton, Massachusetts 01720. Make all checks payable to William A. Blyberg.

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Most of us agree that the best characters in comics are those who quietly win us over... the ones who arrive with a minimum of hype and wait for the readers to notice them. To find a character like this already snugly involved with an established comic is something akin to finding a nugget of gold in a dark mine, as opposed to having a sign posted that reads, "Gold Here!".

I'm sure you all remember the year Spider-Man stole his way silently to the newsstands... or when a supposedly one-shot character named Red Sonja met Conan for the first time...or the panel in which Howard The Duck stumbled out of some swampland reeds and chomped his stogie at Man-Thing and Korrek. No one took out full page house ads proclaiming their comings. No one engaged in the sort of offensive brow-beating that results in the "if you don't like this character you're a clod" attitude. The characters appeared, and became immortal.

This year, it seems we may have another such character. She is taking Fandom by storm, which, by coincidence, is her name: Storm.

It's a credit to the oft-disputed readers' intelligence that Storm is as popular as she is. She appears in X-MEN, a book simply loaded with marvelous characters, and yet it is she who is the most striking element in the entire series. But...why?

It's obvious. She was meant to be.

At Rivercon '75, Dave Cockrum was quoted as saying of Storm:

"...well what I had in mind was to make her the most powerful woman in comics, and the most beautiful woman in comics, and I think I've succeeded...If I can find someone who looks like her, the two tickets to Tierra del Fuego are right here in my pocket.".

Indeed, Ororo (her real name) is the most beautiful woman in comics, as she is the first heroine to combine American standards of beauty with those of another (African) culture, thereby making her exotic and stunningly sensual. She evokes a very earthy, very natural sexuality. She is an African...tall, statuesque, with long white hair that sets off her complexion. Her eyes change with her mood; deep blue when emotive, empty when in action, exploding with light when using her powers. There is, as a result, a mystery about her; a mystery which heightens the air of eroticism surrounding her.

As for being the most powerful woman in comics, again that is very true. When Crystal began appearing regularly in the FANTASTIC FOUR, it seemed natural that her elemental powers make her the most powerful member. However, she was suprisingly ineffectual. Zephyr, who appeared in the LIVING MUMMY strip, was more powerful and adept at her control of the wind, but still not nearly the force that an elemental should be.

But in Storm, the overwhelming power of such a control over the elements is realized. She is possibly more powerful than Thor. Thor simply whips up a storm and lets it do its thing. Ororo controls the details of the storm.

She is constantly finding new intricacies to her power, such as her ability to confine such tremendous power to a small area, and her ability to control cosmic winds. One wonders what limits (if indeed there are limits) there are to her powers. She is certainly more goddess than mutant.

At this writing, her origin has yet to be published (and may have seen print by the time you read this). However, it seems academic at this point. Storm has gained a tremendous popularity because of her mystery and sensuality, and in view of this, there is no real need to rush the facts.

She has one of the most intriguing and enjoyable personalities in comics, mainly because she is so complex, and it's fun picking out the bits and pieces that make up her character. She is a study in logical contradiction. For instance, she values freedom yet practices restraint. She is clearly a free spirit, a libertarian, and needs to feel fully free, emotionally and physically. Indeed, she suffers from aggravated claustrophobia. And yet she confines her emotions at all times, keeping a calm, unemotional demeanor. She is an introvert.

Also, she is both a natural and a supernatural; her African heritage ties her to a culture that is traditionally associated with the land and the elements. Also, we have noted her earthy sensuality. However, that same sensuality often becomes so overwhelming that it becomes unearthy, even unearthly, reminding of the sirens of classical myth, whose beauty was irresistible. And her control of those natural elements she is associated with makes her seem more of a goddess than an earth-mother. And yet, she is, inexplicably, both. Perhaps this combination makes her the definitive superheroine. The goddess part of her puts her above the rest of humanity, and the earth-mother aspect anchors her to the masses. Too, she encompasses both the power of a goddess and the charisma of the earth-mother. It is a rare,delicate combination, to be savored.

To continue, she is alternatively naive and worldly; naive in that she is unaware of the world she lives in, having lived for most of her life in a fantasy world in which she was a deity worshipped by her followers and called by them in moments of crisis; naive in that she still knows very little of herself and her powers, which is why she has enrolled in Professor Xavier's school. And yet, she has a jaded worldliness about her. She knows well her capabilities and is remarkably confident. She enters new situations with apprehension, but never self-doubt. She knows herself, but only in a certain context, being comfortable with that. Look at her relationship with Colossus, who, having been brought up on a communist farm in Russia, has never experienced a woman like Ororo before, and has the equivalent of a school boy crush on her. She treats him with a warmth tempered with understanding and genuine affection, and knows she can handle the relationship without sacrificing anything.

She is also alternatively submissive and assertive. This is due to her apparant empathy. Or perhaps Storm, being so close to nature, can feel or detect natural signals in other people. Whatever, she is always quite certain of the feelings of those around her, knowing when her authority is needed, and when she is best an equal member of the team. When Cyclops was troubled over the recent battle he had fought with his brother, Havoc, Storm realized the severity of his feelings and assumed the authority to prevent Wolverine from attacking Scott. Storm simply said, "You will do nothing, Wolverine--not now, not ever, or you will answer to me.". Here again is the complexity of Storm. Her manner of dealing with Wolverine was hard, simple, straight and effective. Also, very cold. But yet, the reasons stem from her depth of understanding the human condition and its various needs.

It is also interesting to note how quickly Wolverine bowed to her command. Wolverine does not like taking orders from anyone, and such is the nature of his antagonistic relationship with Cyclops. Cyclops is the leader and Wolverine won't accept it. Yet he accepted Storm's authority (perhaps because of the frightening reality of her threat). It isn't difficult to see that Storm is much more of a natural leader than Scott. And this is only natural...as a goddess in Kenya, she had led her people for years. However, she makes no pretensions toward leadership in the X-MEN. She lets Scott give the orders and she co-operates. Again, Storm's depth of understanding explains this. She knows that she has much to learn, but also realizes that Scott is learning too. He about leadership; she about herself. To challenge his authority with her own would displace, and ultimately, destroy the purpose of the group. Her time to lead is in the future, when she is ready, and when she is needed. At present, Storm knows her power and her authority, but is content to keep them under control until she better knows herself.

She also has a charmingly innocent concern with her appearance. "Tell me, Kurt...am I... pretty?". Storm has become Westernized. In Kenya, she was one with nature, and nature was beautiful; so it followed that she would be beautiful. The western world has been ugly. As Professor X foretold her, it would be ugly, "but it is real--far more real than the fantasy you're living in now" (meaning her life as a goddess in Kenya). Storm has seen her fantasy dispelled. She has seen nature ravaged, and has sought consolation, as most westerners do, with her own beauty. It is all she has left of her fantasy, and she holds on to it.

It hasn't taken long for Storm to emerge as the most fabulous woman in comics. But, of course, she was designed to be such, and is being handled brilliantly by Chris Claremont and Dave Cockrum. For female readers, she is awesome...and ideal. She displays the true feminist spirit in that she does not seek to equate herself with men, but has realized that she can go just as far (perhaps farther) by totally realizing her womanhood. It has already found her a place as Marvel's most powerful woman, possibly its most powerful character in general. For men, she is the ultimate woman ...secure and consistant in her beauty and confidence, and yet so irresistibly mysterious that a lifetime with her is as exciting a prospect as an hour with her. And perhaps more so.

With time, she may become the ultimate character, that being one who is all things to all people. But, hell, even if she doesn't, Storm is still Storm, and that, to be sure, is quite enough.

A CONVERSATION WITH...

DON McGREGOR

WOWEE: To begin with, Don, as it now stands, you've handed in your last series assignments to Marvel. Correct?

DON: By the time your magazine sees print, that fact will be pretty evident. Conclusively gone would be the dramatic way to phrase it. The KILLRAVEN book died with "The Morning After Mourning Prey" (ed. note--AMAZING ADVENTURES #39) although when it was plotted neither Craig or I were aware that it was going to be the finale. The BLACK PANTHER has escaped the clutches of the Ku Klux Klan, moving into his own title, which will be done by Jack Kirby. The POWERMAN strip, in the mysterious ways of comic book intrigue, was taken out of my hands before that.

WOWEE: We were told officially that the KR book was cancelled because of poor sales, yet as it turns out, it was simply killed to make way for a new book by another writer. What were you told concerning the death of the strip?

DON: When the KR series began, I think there was some doubt as to whether or not it would survive for any length of time. Science-fiction has not had one of those remarkable track records as succeeding sales wise, not in comic format, and during its four year history there were times when there were vague threats coming from on high that the book might die. They stayed vague for the most part until about the fall of 1975. At that particular time a number of titles had dropped significantly and many titles were cancelled. KR was selling somewhere in the area of many of the horror titles, which had also been dropping in the percentage of their sales. One of the horror titles was threatened under the same edict that claimed that KR was to get the axe. I'm not going to mention it by name. I don't really have a specific reason for that attitude, but it seems unimportant at any rate. The important factor is that members who have more political power, to phrase it more correctly, can decide which books will get more exposure, for one example, on the bullpens pages. This particular horror series managed to get mentioned on the hype pages every month, or near to it, even if only to mention that the lead character wasn't going to appear in the magazine that month. Right about that time I asked the powers that be, who claim benevolent rule, if we might have a few announcements about the KR series mentioned in those pages, especially some of the more bizarre and divergent aspects that both Craig and I were beginning to introduce into the strip. "Hey Gang," I said, not really in that bantering manner, with a lot more intensity than that, "let's let them know that we have this little odd-ball strip, that might cater to some of the audience that does not even know it exists." The reply was that the decision had already been made to cancel the book and there wasn't any need of wasting valuable space on those pages for a book that was already dead. Strange, it seemed to help that other book. Stranger still, it wasn't KR's death knell. Word came down from on high again that KR was granted a reprieve. Craig and I were ecstatic. Miracles still work. And after some of the events that have occured to me in the past year, I wouldn't have put money on such an alien concept.

After the reprieve, official word relented and they did give us one notice that said we were the best-selling s-f comic, or some such thing. That was curious, since we were on the verge of cancellation, but I suppose it had something to do with being one of the few titles with that kind of slant.

When the real, bonafide death of KR actually happened, there wasn't any warning. I walked into the office, and the newest of the rotating editors (it was like musical chairs for awhile) apologetically informed me that KR was gone. No reprieve, this time. Craig came in the offices, not more than an hour later and I gave him the news. Both of us were pretty stunned. Craig and I had worked together on that strip for over two years. You tend to become a bit close to the characters, to the potential of the strip. Each issue you manage to achieve a tiny bit of the potential and it continues to open up to you, wider and wider, the vision extending. Now it was severed. Vision gone. One writer/editor came running up to us, shrieking, "Oh, boy, now that KILLRAVEN's dead, Craig, you can work with me!".

WOWEE: That's pretty cold.

DON: Yeah, that's pretty cold. And this was a person I had known for a long time. I could understand it if it was somebody I didn't know, but this was somebody that I'd spent a lot of time talking to. You don't expect that kind of treatment. It's kind of a Nurse Ratched mentality, a kind of insensitivity where they just have no respect for other peoples' feelings at all. You can be standing there in an office holding onto a piece of artwork and one of these people will run in and say "I haven't seen that" and rip it right out of your hands. The least they could do would be to ask...I mean at least have some common human courtesy that is not extended to you. Not even that little bit of dignity and respect.

I'm not going to name particular names and things like that because I feel it's unfair to the people. They wouldn't be able to reply, or whatever. I'll talk about things that happened there, but I just wouldn't name some of the people specifically. I don't know why because I know they've said things about me that have come to me from different readers who've talked to these people at conventions. These same people will be very nice to you to your face. That sense of hypocracy.

WOWEE: It seems as though in comics, the norm is...when a book is cancelled, you simply pick up and move to a new project, not worrying or thinking about the other book. Yet with people like Craig and yourself, it's different...

DON: Well I still miss the characters a lot. You have to understand that I had those books plotted way ahead. I had the next two years of KR, a lot of the things we never disclosed about KR that I hinted at in "Only The Computer..." "Death In The Family" and especially, "The 24-Hour Man" (ed. note--AMAZING ADVENTURES #s 30, 34 and 35 respectively). That's where I even ceased to be subtle. I really started to throw it out there and if you take those three issues in tangent, they give you a very definitive picture of who and what KR really is. We're

just beginning to realize his potential as a character. I just can't believe at times that I won't be adding any more words for Old Skull or KR or T'Challa...

On the last KR book, "The Morning After Mourning Prey", they didn't even add the right title to it, as it just says "Mourning Prey" now. Their defense is they assumed Craig and I changed the title since Craig designed the "Mourning Prey" logo. I know I went in there and personally told them we needed the rest of the title; Craig assures me that he went in there and talked to some of the people in charge. He just drew "Mourning Prey" because he wanted it very specifically designed and encorporated heavily into the artwork. It's unfortunate because the title "The Morning After..." is very important to the structure of the story and what it means in the key to its interpretation. I was told also that no two words went together in that book.

WOWEE: Really? I think that story, and the book in general, were complex, appealing to, one might say, the more mature readers...

DON: I wish they had other ways of marketing so they could reach different audiences with the books. The KR book lasted for over three years and s-f isn't really noted for having any kind of durability in the comic medium. It seems as if it had some lasting potential. I think the point is, if the KR book could appeal to an older audience or some of the s-f audience, if they could get it out there and market it so they could reach some of these people. A series like KR has a much lower print run (the number of actual copies printed of each title) than a title like SPIDER-MAN. In many cases, KR never made it to many stores, and probably because of its smaller number of available copies, never made the college bookstores. If KR had been marketed, let's say, so that the first copies hit the Universities where it seemed popular, there's a chance we might still be around. Maybe, maybe not. But I think they should check out the marketing more specifically, put a little money into the research, and help spread the available options to people who read comics. Comics themselves, not just in terms of KR or any of the books I did, but as a medium, could attract other audiences that they don't normally get because people don't expect to find these things in comics. And I think they need to do that research so they're not having to get an entirely new readership every three or four years, which I think is the way they've got it calculated now.

WOWEE: To maintain that readership, to keep them reading <u>past</u> that three or four year period, I feel you need certain books that have something in them, something a little more substantial than what's there in general now.

DON: Well of course what happens is that the readers become bored with the material they're reading. Let's say, the Marvel Comics line had at one point close to 70 or 80 titles a month. When you have that many titles that are exactly the same, somebody's going to get bored somewhere along the line. You have to have some kind of differentiation. In trying to keep a status quo on all the books, you kill a lot of growth, creativity and potential audience that might want to get involved with comics, or at least want to stay with them.

WOWEE: There were KILLRAVEN, DOCTOR STRANGE, the BLACK PANTHER, MASTER OF KUNG FU, MAN-THING...but with the exception of MOKF, they're all gone or at least not the same (progressive if you will) books they once were.

DON: I don't think they should try to kill everything that doesn't conform to their standards. There's room for all kinds of comics and I think one of the sad things is constantly saying "you can't do this in comics, you can't do that...don't you understand, this is not comics". Well it's comics if it's words and pictures on a printed page, sir. I'm sorry about that. It could be good or bad comics depending on your point of reference, but there should be some kind of alternative so not all comic books are the same. I think there are all different types of escapism. And I think there's a great deal of escapism in the BLACK PANTHER and KR. Just because we handled some very serious subjects, and at times we did... Some of the KR stuff gets down to showing how absurd things are at this point in time and place. "The Day The Monuments Shattered" and "Something Worth Dying For" (ed. note--AMAZING ADVENTURES #s 31 and 26 respectively) handled it in that way. We approached some of the subjects with a kind of ironic whimsy, a touch of caustic humor.

WOWEE: The Old Skull origin ("Arena Kill", AMAZING ADVENTURES #37) was in that vein. There appears to be a belief that if a story or book deals with social commentary or commentaries on relationships between people, then it's not escapism.

DON: I suppose what they mean by that is it forces them to review themselves and their lives and in that sense it isn't escapism. But there is nothing wrong with a little of that. In another sense, the stories are escapist. There are very, very many senses. The Panther fighting the crocodile (ed. note--JUNGLE ACTION #10) is quite escapist stuff; it's done very graphically, very flamboyantly...a very visual thing. But on the other hand, there are other elements happening there also. But I think many of these people don't like to have to ask themselves questions: they just want to keep going on.

WOWEE: There is also an often used argument that comics should not contain a liberal amount of copy, and that <u>that</u> is not comics...

GRUENWALD

DON: I don't understand people saying it's not comics. My copy was no heavier, and I think Peter Gillis tabulated the amounts of words, and Stan Lee was much heavier than I ever was in copy (ed. note--it must be mentioned that when Stan Lee was writing, the size of the original pages were larger). My copy may have been different than Stan's...I just ask myself, what can I do that makes this story valid, a reason for me to do it other than to pick up a pay check. I have nothing against wanting to be paid for my writing, but that can't be the major reason I do it. My copy was not just describing what was going on in the pictures; I don't believe so; that's not what I was attempting to do. I tried to give the story as many facets as possible, both in character and in theme, so that in 17 pages you could have as many shades of meaning and interpretation, rather than just a straight one level thing. You could read it on one, two basic levels but hopefully people would get some other things out of it as well. I don't know any other way to state it than that: to hope that it can enlighten, and that it stimulates thought...

WOWEE: I think your comics were among the most visually orientated...It seems to me that the best comics are produced when the writer and artist realize the other.

DON: Yeah, a lot of times I did let the art tell the story. Many times Craig would just knock me out and I would ask myself how am I going to write anything, this stuff is so beautiful. What can I do so that it won't be just a pretty picture book, so that it would work on all levels. Craig was always a great challenge also because he was one of the few artists I've worked with who was really involved with the characters. We could sit around at night and talk about all the different aspects of KR's personality.

WOWEE: What about your involvements with the layouts in your stories. For example, the integrated title splashes and double page spreads. Have you ever had any artistic training or is that just your feeling for telling a visual story?

DON: From the first time I started doing comics I was interested in the way the story would be told. And I guess it has a basis in film also because I'm very interested in that. I think anyone who sees "The Fade-Away Walk" (ed. note--CREEPY #40, Don's first printed comic book story) which I laid most of it out myself, from the continuity shots to the reverse angles to some of the bizarre layouts for the pages...I was so incredibly impressed when I first saw the story because it was done by Tom Sutton, and was one of the most beautiful jobs I've ever seen Tom do. It was totally embellished with graphite pencil; great looking stuff. And it really spoiled me for comics. I had this fantasy that this was the way it was going to be every time I wrote a story. Anything I asked for, and more, because Tom added his own stuff as well as what I asked for. There you have not only your own sense of graphics and imagination, but the artists' as well. And I thought "oh, this is the way it's going to be all the time." Unfortunately I found out later that it's not quite the case (laughter). On the other hand, I've had an incredibly good fortune to work with some very talented people whom I respected and who respected me so that we could work in a very close relationship. I didn't have as much to do with the layouts in the KR book as with the others but I would give suggestions to Craig which a lot of times he would just ignore and say he had something better. I would never argue with Craig because he was putting so much time and effort into it. Obviously it would be insane of me, working with one of the best people in the business, to say "hey, you didn't do this!".

Now working with Billy Graham I did have a lot to do with many of the layouts. With Rich Buckler, it was actually working side by side. In the PANTHER, a lot of it was diagramed right on the plots because I do a page by page breakdown. I feel a writer should structure his own story. That's to me a part of what storytelling is all about.

WOWEE: As opposed to, say, letting the artist take the initiative and structure it his way...

DON: Well that might work if you didn't have a limited number of pages, as an artist may just get hung up in drawing the pictures and not bother with the pacing. Some artists handle it better than others. But in a way, I feel it's the writer's responsibility to pace the story, to layout exactly how it's going to unravel.

WOWEE: In reference to the PANTHER, one of the editors at Marvel told me that JUNGLE ACTION was their worst selling book. Yet now they turn around and give the Panther his own title and as we know, a character isn't given his/her own book unless the sales justify it.

DON: Oh but they do if it's Jack Kirby (laughter). Not having really been privy to the sales figures, I imagine the book dropped off when we started doing to Klan material. I'll take some of the blame for that, but I think they should equally. They were afraid of the subject matter. We were talking about marketing, if they had known how to market it, if they got it out to the newspapers that we were handling some really serious issues...At the time, they told me that the Klan would firebomb us, or they'd sue us and I thought that was pretty strange; I just couldn't imagine it. And besides, anything I did within the books that concerned the Klan was all a kind of documented evidence. I obviously used it in a fictionalized sense, but all the routines and such are accurate.

It was such a complex piece of work, not only in terms of plot, but in theme and what I had hoped to achieve with it, handling something so real as the KKK in a comic book. I think it was valid. They, that marvelous, ambiguous "they" who shape what can and can't be in a comic book, they suggested "why don't you do The Sons Of The Serpent?". They didn't understand that I wanted to get it past the phony cabels and deal with very real elements of our time and place. I wanted to depict not only the KKK but analyse where we are these days in America, the kind of polarization that is tearing this country apart. I wish we could have done the next PANTHER book, the sixth chapter of the Klan saga, as it would have more firmly established the boundaries that would be encompassed in the novel as a whole. The next issue was to be called "Dragon Soldiers Marching As To War" and it had Wind Eagle's origin in it as well. Plus, the third telling of how Angela Lynne died. I'm not going to give it away, but I have to tell you one thing--that much of what you've seen in the beginning books is not what really happened. The motivations are entirely different. Once you understand the key to that it's easy to start determining what's going on. There are a lot of clues tossed in, some of them are camouflaged a little, but they're there and in re-readings of the story, you'll probably pick them out.

There was a third Panther novel planned, by the way, which would have been called "The Panther and the Land of the Apotheid".

WOWEE: What would that have been about?

DON: Obviously his adventures in South Africa. And also, the search for his mother.

WOWEE: With that, there would have been a return of some of the supporting characters from "Panther's Rage", picking them up a few years later?

DON: Right. There are a lot of changes in all of them from W'Kabi, Taku...and especially Kantu

because he would have been two years older and at that time in life, it would have made a big change in what he was. There would have been some interesting things. I had always intended in "The Panther Vs. The Klan" to do at least a four page sequence of W'Kabi writing the Panther a letter about what was going on in Wakanda. I didn't want to completely cut him off so you'll notice that there are lines in almost all the issues that refer to his memories of Wakanda and what happened during "Panther's Rage". There's one bit where Wind Eagle calls him "Panther-devil" (laughter), but it's not humorous this time and is serious. The Panther remembers how fondly he used to recall Tayete saying that to him. But here it's done in an extremely different context because Wind Eagle is in a way convinced that T'Challa is some kind of agent of Satan. Yet to anybody who's read "Panther's Rage" it reinforces that alignment of the memories of Wakanda.

WOWEE: And I feel those allignments are strong. I know I still miss people like W'Kabi, Tayete ...and already miss people like Old Skull, M'Shulla, Quentin Chase...

DON: Okay, Quentin Chase is a very, very tender spot with me. I love Quentin Chase. He's not a hero, in the comic book meaning of the term, although he displays instances of social concern and awareness...and acts on those principles even when it might cost him great expenses in his personal life. And I know some people felt I was being sentimental because I had a scene between Chase and his daughter...or anytime you have a scene where the hero and heroine kiss; but I guess that's because they don't care much for inter-personal relationships, having their affairs too tied up in their comic books.

They're probably going to sleep with <u>them</u> at night instead (laughter).

WOWEE: (laughter) Ahem, I noticed it with Chase and also with Cage, that you've tried to present both the good and bad sides of characters.

DON: Well yeah because basically in comics, you get caricatures and I was trying to get beyond that, get into the subtleties of the characters. We all have situations where we display good traits and where we display bad traits. MARY HARTMAN, MARY HARTMAN, by the way, is a terrific example of that. They use characters where they can show different traits. Tom Hartman can be such a complete asshole in some respects, yet in certain other situations he really shows a little bit of dignity.

WOWEE: Yeah, in his union activities he'll have great instincts, yet in other situations he comes on with his macho "I'm the husband, you're the wife" attitude.

DON: Yes and in that kind of attitude he's incredibly thick. ARRGH, Tom, wise up!

With Quentin Chase, it would have been very easy to do a cop character who is very stereotyped--either make a hero out of him, or a crum. And I think we've hidden Chase in-between. Just a human being who happens to be a cop. I had a lot of things planned for him that we'll unfortunately never get the chance to do.

WOWEE: You were supposed to take over DEATHLOK and mentioned that you were thinking of putting Chase in there.

DON: Yes, at the time supposedly I could, but then the DEATHLOK book was cancelled before we ever had the chance to do it. Rich had already brought Deathlok back into the 1970s with his last issue and I was going to pick up on that idea, and we discussed it. I was going to bring some CIA agents into it also. And, Ryker, back in the 1970s, realizing what's going to happen and how Deathlok would figure into the outcome of Ryker's dynasty, tries to kill Luther Manning before Manning becomes Deathlok. And the CIA agents, in the meantime, are trying to kill Deathlok because they can't figure out how he knows so much about their security. They figure they've had a breach of security somewhere and go paranoid (laughter) trying to find out who's leaking the information. But of course Deathlok knows about them from the vantage point of the future.

WOWEE: But how would Chase fit in..?

DON: Aha! Because Deathlok would have to come into conflict with the authorites in our time period, if only because of his costume. Also, Chase would really have come into contact with the CIA because once he became involved in the Deathlok case, the CIA would come up to him and tell him not to get involved.

WOWEE: I don't think he would have backed off.

DON: You're probably right. The stupid idiot would probably hang his head out there and make some kind of a moral stand.

WOWEE: (laughter) Well he's always off-duty doing his on-duty work...

DON: (laughter) Yeah, Quentin's kind of committed. I liked him a lot. I really did.

WOWEE: At the 1976 July Con in New York, on a Marvel Comics panel on which most of the editors and writers were on, the editors claimed that a writer is never taken off a book unless he/she quits, or the book is selling miserably. And to that, Steve Gerber retorted "the glare from the whitewash is blinding me."

DON: (laughter) Well good for Steve. What did

the people say in response to Steve when he said that?

WOWEE: There was some applause, and the panel was dumbfounded. They tried to switch the subject very quickly.

DON: You better believe it. That's their tactic.

WOWEE: How do you relate this to your being taken off LUKE CAGE?

DON: Back before I knew they were going to drop the whole roof down upon my head--and you know they were playing kind of political upheavals and the editorial chairs were changing all the time--I was very content where I was at the time. Outside of doing THE PANTHER and KR, the only other book I ever wanted to do was LUKE CAGE. I never had the desire to do SPIDER-MAN or the FF because the books are too regimented and locked in. I'm not putting the books down ...I'm saying that as a writer, a creative person, I was just not really interested in getting tied up in the mainstream books. You can't change any element because if you vary anything maybe that's the point that is selling the book. So to me, there's no sense of freedom there. So I was doing everything I wanted to at the time and then the flak really started to hit the fan. Things were being changed. They kept telling me I was on the book, then I was off it, then back on it again...so that's why you'll notice a kind of erratic thing in terms of the sub-plots. Characters disappear and then reappear, then I don't do anything with them again. I had already done two CAGEs when I was told that another writer wanted to do the book. But the editors told me I could finish the trilogy and they needed another book ahead of time for Frank Robbins to do. I would not have done "The Fire This Time" (ed. note--LUKE CAGE #32) in the sequence I did it in if I had been doing the series full time because I knew they would hand me my head. This is not the late 1960s, and when you start doing stories that are based in real places and make comments on them, it's not as easily tolerated. A lot of people got upset and felt I shouldn't have made any comments about Jamaica, Queens. I did it because I felt it was an important story to do. I wanted to get some very real elements into the book because I felt CAGE was the perfect place to do that, much more so than any other Marvel book.

WOWEE: I think a lot of people misinterpreted that story, and felt it was simply a race story.

DON: It wasn't. It was a story about how much our culture is changing and the inability of a lot of people to be able to cope with it. I can empathize very much with Wildfire in his sense of disorientation, of displacement, that none of the values he was raised on are valid anymore. But what I can't empathize with is how he reacts and what he violently makes retribution against. He's stupid and ignornat and thoroughly unjustified. The race element is the last straw on the camel's back and is the closest thing to him that he can strike back against. He can't strike back against the changes in his wife, his kids or the society; they're either too close or too vague a concept. The Simmons family becomes a focal point of all that hatred and that's the one thing he decided he can go out and do something about: a totally distorted and dangerously psychotic viewpoint.

At any rate, then they decided that the other writer would not take over the book. So I started doing the Spear material, bringing back Grusty Mess and Charlton Grundge, and they vanish again because right after that I'm told again that I'm no longer doing the book anymore. Well, this was really starting to get like a joke. I got pretty upset the second time because you put a lot of time and effort preparing for a series. They said this time it was because there was a change in editors and the current writer not only didn't want me on CAGE, but said that I'd be losing a lot of work if I stayed at Marvel. So I went to the new editor and he said no, that wasn't the case at all; the only reason I was off CAGE was because somebody else wanted to do it. It was pretty much like being in the middle of Watergate: you know somebody is not telling the truth.

They had also been giving me a hard time about the fact that I had used the word "nigger" in the CAGE book. The first time it was cut completely; the second, they replaced it with "you dumb idjit". Oh, when I saw that I nearly cringed. Luke Cage has become Ben Grimm I guess. When we got to be doing the Spear stuff, I had Spear saying to Cage something to the effect "okay Super-Spade, I don't know how you can live with Burstein but..." They got really upset about the term "Super-Spade". I thought it was pretty innocuous, being a flippant remark by a black villian to another black character. I couldn't really understand these white bastions of ethnic morality who get so timid. It's like when I said I wanted to do a Willie Best character in the PANTHER book. I was told I couldn't do that. I don't know why--we're doing a story where everybody is black; the good guys, the bad guys, the in-between guys, everybody is, so that there's all kinds of morality represented. But there was a kind of "no, no you can't do that!" wide-eyed hysteria. After they cut the line, I finally decided I'd had it and went with one of the proofreaders to see Stan Lee. I asked Stan if he really thought there was anything offensive or wrong there, and he said no. I also told him I felt bad about losing the CAGE book and would like to keep it. Stan said sure, we can work it out, don't worry about it. Two days later I was called into the downstairs office and told that if I ever went up to Stan's office again, that

would be the last job I'd ever do for Marvel.

WOWEE: They didn't like the idea that you went over their heads?

DON: Yeah, but I never mentioned any names, and all I asked was "do you feel..?" They were just tampering with so much I couldn't believe it. Then I was told I would be off the CAGE book. They'd even cut compliments I'd written in the letters pages refering to the splendid job Doug Moench and Paul Gulacy were doing on Shang-Chi. Sheesh! And I'd thought the letters pages were one of the Bullpen's favorite places to plug other titles. Double Sheesh!!

WOWEE: It seems as though there is a lot of infighting within the editorial offices. And I guess it refers to what we talked about before, that the books that are different are not to be tolerated.

DON: Well at one point they told me I was "too close to the Black Experience", that they didn't want me handling the black characters. I don't know what they meant by that, but it's a catch phrase. They pull out catch phrases when they don't know what they want, or don't want. I've noticed that not with all editors but with many that I've dealt with in comics. I said that was really heavy news you're laying on me, that I'm losing the books, and I was told I was too close to it. Too close to what? My livelihood? Yeah, a little bit guys. The strange thing is, if somebody tampered with these same people's scripts, they would have been going around the offices screaming. And I never did that. If there were changes I didn't agree with, I tried to discuss it if at all possible. Not that I never did anything wrong, because I did, but I obviously had reasons for almost everything. I spent a lot of time in deliberation and I know that at least I had the best intentions when I did them at the time, that they would have some kind of validity and worth, and would give something to people. I think that's important, giving something to the audience. The only way I know is to sit behind a typewriter and give everything I've got at that point in time: to try to do the best story I can.

WOWEE: So you wouldn't say you're trying to preach, you're just trying to give the best you possibly can.

DON: I'm trying to entertain, I'm trying to stimulate thought, I'm trying to do a suspense narrative, I'm trying to do atmosphere, I'm trying to reach theme, plot, character. I try not to do wasted scenes. Every scene has a reason for being there. Sometimes it may have two different interpretations, depending on what level you want to take it on. Sometimes I may be talking about the characters on one level, and on another, about something personal that's just happened to me in the realm of comics that some of the inside readers might catch or might not. I'm sure all the people who read the last KR and BLACK PANTHER books will know that some of it is about the fact that those are my last KRs and BLACK PANTHERs: some of my attitudes having to write a last book, knowing it's my last book and that the life breath has been cut out from you before you had a chance to do it all.

WOWEE: In terms of story, would you have handled any of your books differently if you didn't have to worry about Code approval?

DON: Yes.

WOWEE: How so? Male and female, or in general?

DON: In every sense. The differences would have been in what we could have handled in the relationships between the characters. I certainly would have done more with T'Challa and Monica, Carmilla and M'Shulla. One of the things I had come up with just before we found out it was the last book was having Carmilla pregnant. As you know, neither Carmilla or M'Shulla are married. One is black and one is white and that raised enough flak when it first came out. Craig told me at the time "Are you crazy! That will be your last book!" How little did he know that he was being very prophetic.

WOWEE: Okay, Don, I and I'm sure all of your followers are very interested in what's next, what you're going to be doing, in comics or whatever. Could you tell us something about that?

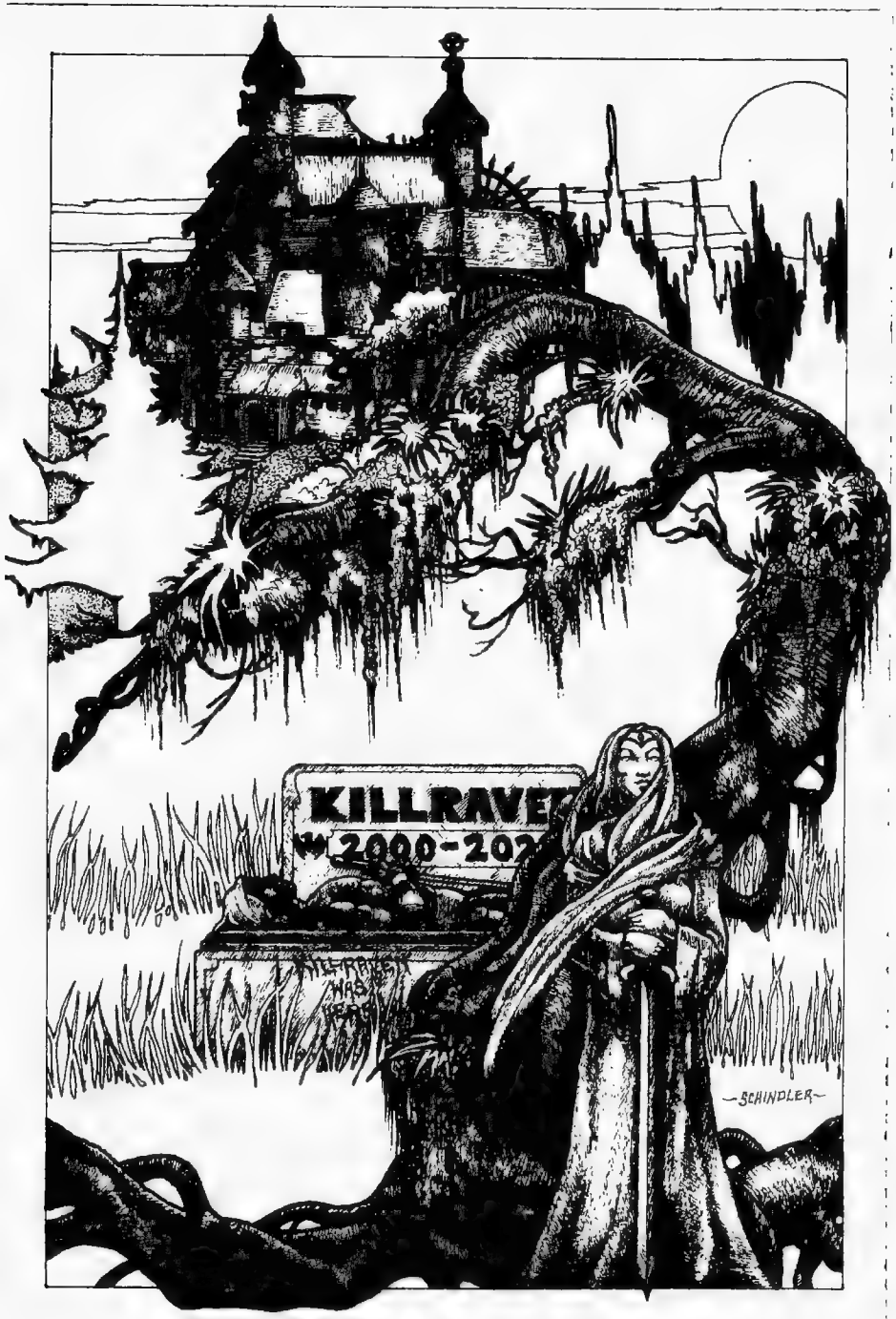
DON: I'm currently working on a new strip called "Dragonshade".

WOWEE: And where's that going to be?

DON: It will be in DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU, and as far as I know it's going to make it to print (laughter). I've been very fortunate that John David Warner, who is editing the kung-fu book, likes much of my material and we have a pretty good working relationship. We've discussed the project and he knows much of what it's about, and seems very excited about it. And I'm pretty excited about it myself. We don't have Code approval over the series so there's a couple of things we can do that I wasn't able to handle in the other books. And, we'll be working with Tom Sutton again, and that's great because I think Tom is one of the most under-rated artists in the comics business, especially in terms of telling the story. And as I said, I'm pretty excited about it. I think you might find it interesting.

WOWEE: That's great, Don, and may we on behalf of all your fans, wish you the best of luck.

DON: Thanks, and as always, Hang In There!


KILLRAVEN
2000-202
—SCHINDLER—

Spanning more than three decades of conflict, Captain America and the Red Skull stand as perhaps the ultimate confrontation of good versus evil. Yet while their rivalry goes back as far as CAPTAIN AMERICA #1, March-April 1941, we'll concern ourselves basically with the 60s and 70s as most of us, self included, weren't even in existance back in 1941.

Hardly anywhere will you find a more consistant meeting of superhero and super-villian as with Cap and the Red Skull. When you get right down to it, no other Marvel villian, save Doctor Doom, has had more appearances than the Red Skull (the Sub-Mariner doesn't count as he, in truth, is a hero).

Just what can be attributive to the Skull's popularity? Perhaps it's that he and Cap hit it off so well in terms of opposing values; the perfect one-to-one relationship of hero and villian you might say. Or maybe it's that red mask of his. The Red Skull is so often seen with that red mask that his real face is totally neglected, making one think that there is no face beneath that hideous covering. It kind of reminds me of a guy named Doom. Even when the Red Skull's origin was manifested in King-Size AVENGERS SPECIAL #3, we still never got a single good look at his face. However, in CAPTAIN AMERICA #s 117-119, Cap inhabiting the body of the Skull, did remove the mask...but even when Cap applied makesnift make-up to his/Skull's face, we still never found out what the true countenance was like.

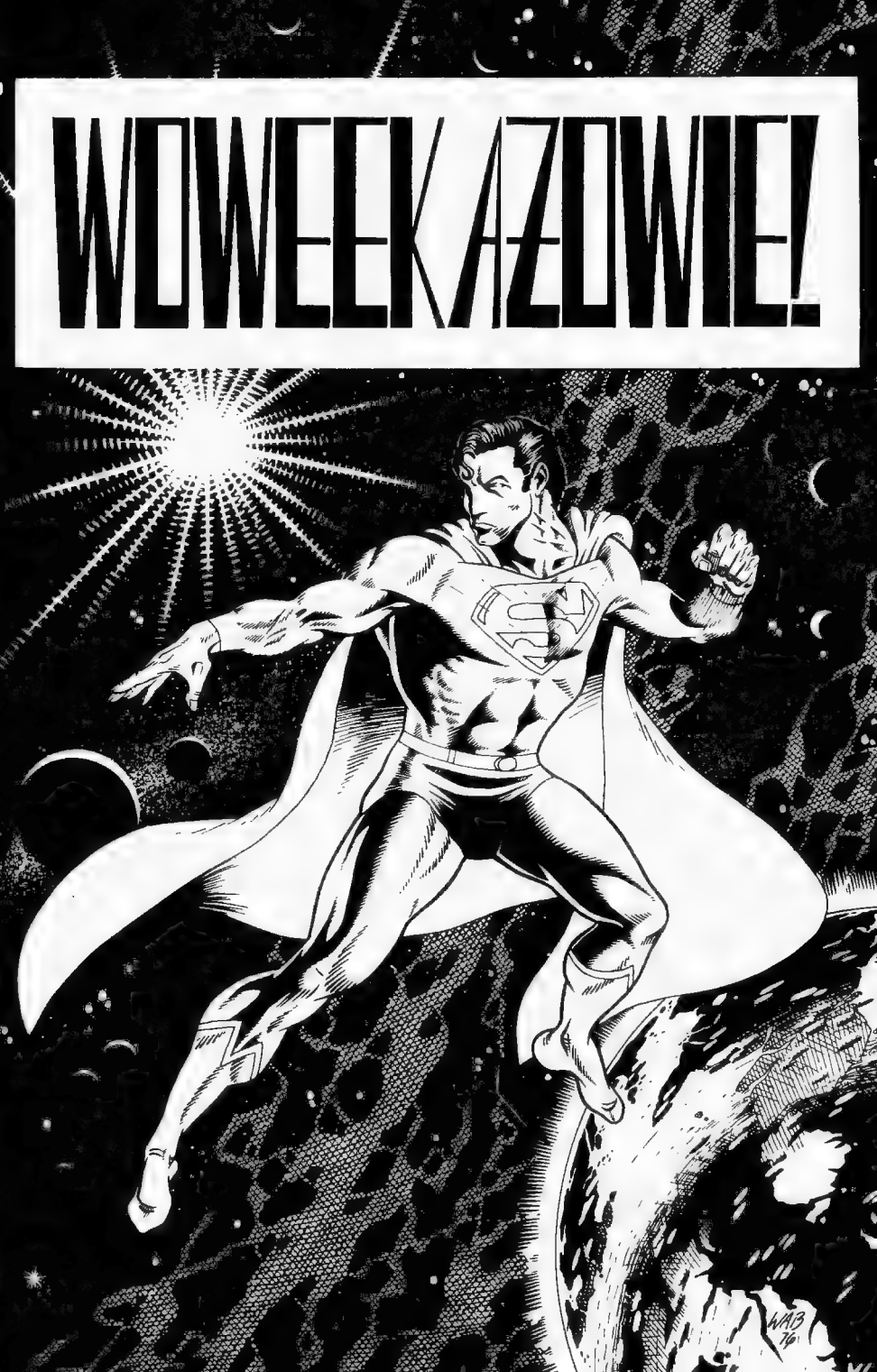
It was Hitler who created the Red Skull. Skully was a mere bellhop in those days, but once ol' Adolf saw that face filled with envy, hatred and evil...enter the Red Skull. Also, it was Hitler's idea for the young bellhop to wear that infamous red mask, created to inspire terror in the hearts of all freedomkind.

Bucky, Cap's kid sidekick, met his demise indirectly at the hands of the Red Skull. You know the oft-times told tragic tale. Even though Baron Zemo was truly responsible, he was acting under orders from the Skull. Skeptics may check TALES OF SUSPENSE #80 for the info.

We all know of Cap's fate after that bomb hurled he and Bucky into oblivion. Yet what of the Red Skull? You had to ask. During his last WW II battle with Cap, the underground bunker in which they were battling was dramatically bombarded. Naturally Cap escaped, but the Skull got trapped under tons of debris. Even there, he was kept alive all the way up until the 60s due to suspended animation, the result of a tentative gas that was released when the bomb hit home. He was awakened for his reappearance in the 60s by a scientific group called THEM.

Cap and the Skull have gone at it so many times that their inevitable clashes are just that...inevitable. From Cosmic Cubes to bizarre weapons to the Crimson Dust of Death, Cap's arch enemy has devilishly concocted the most vile evilries imaginable. Remember that underhanded chicanery scheme that dealt with the flying Falcon? He was actually a puppet-o-pawn of the Skull himself, as so explicitely detailed in CA & F #186. And then there's that notable atrocity, the cruel death of Roscoe, as seen in CA & F #183...a death that the Red Skull has just got to pay for!!!

Being the regular he is, the Red Skull will battle with Cap again and again, as villians of his ilk are wont to do. The two of them have been going at it for more than thirty years, off and on; anybody want to bet we'll see another thirty..?


WOWEEKAZOWIE!
WAB
76

Super Friends and Prisoners: A Look at Marvel & National's Other-Medium Adaptations

by K. J. Robbins

"You'll take the TV road, and we'll take the movie road, and we'll be exploitin' before ye..."

The above lines, in one way or another, are meant to reflect upon the recent entries by National and Marvel comics into the field of other-medium adaptations. National, apparantly at the direction of its new publisher, Jenette Kahn, is developing a line of DC-TV comics, while Marvel is concentrating on film adaptations, as well as experiments with TV and rock music.

The DC-TV line-up consists of SHAZAM!, SUPER FRIENDS, ISIS and WELCOME BACK, KOTTER. The SHAZAM comic, which pre-dates the successful CBS Saturday morning program, is being restructured to conform with its TV counterpart, courtesy of Nelson Bridwell and Kurt Schaffenburger. The comics' Billy Batson is being sent on roving assignment by his boss at radio station WHIZ and will be picking up an adult mentor in order to have a closer resemblance to the TV SHAZAM. Being neither a Saturday morning TV freak nor a SHAZAM fan, this writer can offer no opinion on either subject.

ISIS started out as a companion feature to the TV SHAZAM. The most suprising thing about the comic is that it took National so long, almost a year, to produce it. Basing judgement on the ISIS story appearing in SHAZAM #25, by Denny O'Neil and Dick Giordano, the series appears to be straight superhero adventurism, rather than the cartoonish style of the Big Red Cheese. ISIS' own comic will be done by O'Neil, Ric Estrada and Wally Wood. Since female-lead comics generally fail very quickly, it will be interesting to see how ISIS fares. Obviously, National is hoping that a large number of TV viewers will carry over to the comic.

SUPER FRIENDS, the Saturday morning JLA, seems to be National's counterpart to SPIDEY SUPER STORIES. And, if the announced contents of the first Nelson Bridwell, Ric Estrada, Joe Orlando and Vince Colletta issue are for real, this promises to be one of the most moronic comics on the market. Interestingly, SUPER FRIENDS goes into comic publication at about the same time that the two-year old cartoon gets cancelled.

WELCOME BACK, KOTTER is the only one of the TV comics with no relationship to a comic in its background. The SHAZAM comic begat SHAZAM TV, which begat ISIS TV, the ISIS comic and the restructured SHAZAM comic. The JLA begat SUPER FRIENDS TV, begat the comic. KOTTER has no such relations. What is has for a basis is one of the most successful programs of the last TV year, and National has hopes for it.

WONDER WOMAN is already being groomed for the DC-TV line, in preparation for the TV WONDER WOMAN's eventual placement as a regular series. Already, Steve Trevor has been returned from the dead to help bridge the gap between comics and TV. In the future, WW and Trevor will be returning to World War II, the period in which the TV series is set, although WW will continue to appear in the JLA and SUPER FRIENDS comics. The present WW team, Marty Pasko, Jose Delbo and Vince Colletta, will probably be responsible for the future stories.

Obviously, National is hoping to draw a large portion of the TV audience to the comic books. And, if sales figures on the books are big enough, National can be expected to expand its TV line-up. Whether this is good or bad depends upon the individual titles.

Marvel is concentrating its adaptations on the movies, with a couple of experiments in TV and rock music. Movie adaptations are nothing new at Marvel. Over the last couple of years, Marvel has been adapting the five PLANET OF THE APES movies in their black-and-white POTA comic book, and two SINBAD films have appeared in the color comics. Last year, Marvel created MARVEL MOVIE PREMIERE to spotlight their movie adaptations. Its single issue featured the film version of Edgar Rice Burroughs' THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT.

Overall, the past movie adaptations have been very good. In the POTA series, writer Doug Moench, working with a variety of Filipino artists, has managed to upgrade, in the comics, stories that were poorly done turkies (critically, not financially) on the big screen. In particular, the second film, BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES, and the fifth, BATTLE FOR..., have been greatly improved by their transition to the comics, mainly through the use of good scripting.

The SINBAD films have been a hit, a miss. THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD, adapted by Len Wein, George Tuska and Vince Colletta in WORLDS UNKNOWN #7-8, was very well done, faithfully following the script with only minor omissions or deviations. THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD, courtesy of John Warner and Sonny Trinidad, was less successful. Squeezed into a single issue, in MARVEL SPOTLIGHT #25, the 17-page story was forced to omit some of the movies best scenes, such as the transformation of Princess Parisa's maid into a snake-woman, and the battle between the dragon and the cyclops.

THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT, adapted by Marv Wolfman and Sonny Trinidad, in the first (and only) issue of MARVEL MOVIE PREMIERE, is one of Marvel's best adaptations. Wolfman combined the best of Burroughs' novel and the Michael Moorcock/James Cawthorne script to present a well paced adventure. In addition, Wolfman grafted a bit of a later Burroughs sequel, OUT OF TIME'S ABYSS, to explain the evolutionary situation of the island of Caspak, which was not present in the movie.

Probably the best movie adaptation is the joint Marvel/DC production of MGM's THE WIZARD OF OZ. Done by Roy Thomas, John Buscema and the Tribe, this was originally to be a Marvel project. However, at the same time Marvel announced their plans to adapt OZ, DC also announced an OZ project. Rather than put two OZ books on the market, Marvel and DC joined names on the Marvel product, which preceded the previously announced SUPERMAN VS. SPIDER-MAN as the first Marvel/DC comic. THE WIZARD OF OZ comic was marvelously faithful to the 1939 film. Permission was secured from MGM for the use of the features of the stars of the film and the result was that the only thing that could improve the story would be to find a way to bring the music of the film to the comic.

Currently, Marvel is getting into the film industry's newly aroused interest in science-fiction movies by contracting for adaptations of two recent s-f movies, LOGAN'S RUN and THE STAR WARS. For these adaptations, Marvel has picked up on the TV idea of the mini-series. LOGAN'S RUN, to be adapted by Gerry Conway, George Perez and Klaus Janson, has not been given a set number of issues, but THE STAR WARS has been set for a six-issue run, courtesy of Roy Thomas and an unnamed artist.

The Bullpen has also announced a new color s-f comic called FORBIDDEN PLANET, by Marv Wolfman and Dave Cockrum. Whether or not this title is based on the classic of film of the same name remains to be seen.

The most notable of the movie adaptations is the Jack Kirby adaptation of 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. Because of the space needed to sufficiently review this feature, it will not be covered in this article.

Not to be left out of things, Marvel is experimenting with one TV-based comic. THE PRISONER, adapted from the British series seen on American TV about seven years ago, will begin its comic career in November. Marvel has promised to remain faithful to the innovative concepts set forth by the program's creator/star Patrick McGoohan. One report has it that Marvel plans to adapt the 17 episodes of the original series, and then terminate the book. Steve Englehart and Gil Kane had completed the first issue when Englehart left Marvel, and Jack Kirby has been brought in as the new writer/artist. The latest word has it that Kirby plans to simplify the original stories, as he himself is not sure what they were all about. If so, that bodes ill for the fate of the book.

The most curious of Marvel's other-medium adaptations is their entry into the field of rock music. They have announced that a black-and-white comic, presumably a one-shot, is being prepared by Steve Gerber and an unknown artist which will feature the rock group KISS. Quite frankly, this writer cannot see the why of a KISS comic. As far as their music goes, KISS is simply another member of the current group of glitter rockers, sounding no better (or worse) than the rest of the groups. Certainly, they haven't set any trends or revolutionized modern music. The only claim KISS has to notoriety is the creative use of make-up by its members. Maybe that's why Marvel is making a KISS comic: perhaps they feel anyone sporting Halloween faces as colorful as the members of KISS do belong in a comic book.

THE COMPLETE DON

AMAZING ADVENTURES featuring KILLRAVEN

No.	Date	Pp.	Title	Penciller	Inker
21	11/73	19	The Mutant Slayers	Herb Trimpe	Yolande Pijcke
22	1/74	15	Washington Nightmare	Herb Trimpe	Frank Chiarmonte
23	3/74	15	The Legend Assassins	Herb Trimpe	Frank Chiarmonte
24	5/74	15	For He's A Jolly Dead Rebel	Herb Trimpe	Jack Abel
25	7/74	7	The Devil's Marauder	Rich Buckler	Klaus Janson
		8	The Vengeance Threshold (chapter 2)	Rich Buckler	Klaus Janson
26	9/74	15	Something Worth Dying For	Gene Colan	Dan Adkins
27	11/74	15	The Death Breeders	Craig Russell	Jack Abel
28	1/75	15	The Death Merchant	Craig Russell	Craig Russell
29	3/75	19	The Hell Destroyers	Craig Russell	Craig Russell
30	5/75	6	The Rebels Of January And Beyond (12 pages reprinted from AA #23,24)	Craig Russell	Dan Adkins
31	7/75	18	The Day The Monuments Shattered	Craig Russell	Craig Russell
32	9/75	18	Only The Computer Shows Me Any Respect	Craig Russell	Dan Green
34	1/76	18	A Death In The Family	Craig Russell	Craig Russell
35	3/76	18	The 24-Hour Man	Keith Giffin (Craig Russell layouts)	Jack Abel
36	5/76	17	Red Dust Legacy	Sonny Trinidad (Craig Russell layouts)	Sonny Trinidad
37	7/76	17	Arena Kill	Craig Russell	Jack Abel
39	11/76	17	The Morning After Mourning Prey	Craig Russell	Craig Russell

CHAMBER OF CHILLS

5	7/73	6	A Tomb By Any Other Name	Syd Shores	Syd Shores

CREEPY

40	7/71	12	The Fade-Away Walk	Tom Sutton	Tom Sutton
41	9/71	10	A Tangible Hatred	Rich Corben	Rich Corben
43	1/72	14	The Men Who Called Him Monster	Luis Garcia	Luis Garcia
54	7/73	13	This Graveyard Is Not Deserted	Reed Crandall	Reed Crandall
57	11/73	11	The Destructive Image	Ramon Torrents	Ramon Torrents
58	12/73	12	The Waking Nightmare	Munes	Munes
58	12/73	10	An Excuse For Violence	Adolpho Abellan	Adolpho Abellan
59	1/74	14	A Dark And Violent Place	Adolpho Abellan	Adolpho Abellan
59	1/74	13	Got A Creature Was Stirring	Tom Sutton	Tom Sutton
72	7/75	11	Malocchi	Jose Gual	Jose Gual

DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU

33	2/77	30	Dragonshade	Tom Sutton	Tom Sutton

EERIE

37	1/72	14	The Ones Who Stole It From You	Auraleon	Auraleon
38	2/72	12	The Night The Snow Spilled Blood	Tom Sutton	Tom Sutton
45	2/73	8	When Wakes The Dreamer	Suso	Suso

JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY

4	4/73	6	The Man With--Two Faces (w/Gardner Fox)	Winslow Mortimer	Winslow Mortimer

JUNGLE ACTION featuring the BLACK PANTHER

6	9/73	13	Panther's Rage	Rich Buckler	Klaus Janson
7	11/73	15	Death Regiments Beneath Wakanda	Rich Buckler	Klaus Janson
8	1/74	15	Malice By Crimson Moonlight	Rich Buckler	Klaus Janson
9	3/74	15	But Now The Spears Are Broken	Gil Kane	Klaus Janson

McGREGOR CHECKLIST

No.	Date	Pp.	Title	Penciller	Inker
10	7/74	15	King Cadaver Is Dead And Living In Wakanda	Billy Graham	Klaus Janson
11	9/74	15	Once You Slay The Dragon	Billy Graham	Klaus Janson
12	11/74	15	Blood Stains On Virgin Snow	Billy Graham	Klaus Janson
13	1/75	15	The God Killer	Billy Graham	Craig Russell
14	3/75	18	There Are Serpents Lurking In Paradise	Billy Graham	Pablo Marcos
15	5/75	19	Thorns In The Flesh, Thorns In The Mind	Billy Graham	Dan Green
16	7/75	18	And All Our Past Decades Have Seen Revolutions	Billy Graham	Billy Graham
17	9/75	19	Of Shadows And Rages	Billy Graham	Billy Graham
18	11/75	17	Epilogue	Billy Graham	Bob McLeod
19	1/76	18	Blood And Sacrifices	Billy Graham	Bob McLeod
20	3/76	17	They Told Me A Myth I Wanted To Believe	Billy Graham	Bob McLeod
21	5/76	17	A Cross Burning Darkly, Blackening The Night	Billy Graham	Bob McLeod
22	7/76	17	Death Riders On The Horizon	Billy Graham & Rich Buckler	Bob McLeod & Jim Mooney
24	11/76	17	Wind Eagle In Flight	Keith Pollard	Keith Pollard (R. Buckler & M. Severin layouts)

MARVEL PREVIEW

8	Fall/76	11	The Reality Manipulators	Mike Ploog (Marie Severin tones)	Mike Ploog

MONSTERS UNLEASHED

5	4/74	10	Demons Of Slaughter Mansion	Juan Boix	Pablo Marcos
11	4/75	12	This Is Valiant One, Signing Out	Billy Graham	Billy Graham

POWER-MAN

28	12/75	18	The Man Who Killed Jiminy Cricket	George Tuska	Vince Colletta
30	4/76	18	Look What They've Done To Our Lives Ma	Arvell Jones (Rich Buckler layouts)	Keith Pollard
31	5/76	17	Over The Years They Murdered The Stars	Sal Buscema	Crusty Bunkers
32	6/76	17	The Fire This Time	Frank Robbins	Vince Colletta
33	7/76	17	Sticks And Stones Will Break Your Bones, But Spears Can Kill You	Frank Robbins	Vince Colletta
34	8/76	17	Death, Taxes and Springtime Vendettas	Frank Robbins	Frank Springer
35	9/76	17	Of Memories, Both Vicious And Haunting	Joe Giella (Marie Severin layouts)	Frank Giacoia

VAMPIRELLA

15	1/72	12	Welcome To The Witche's Coven	Luis Garcia	Luis Garcia
18	8/72	12	Song Of The Sad-Eyed Sorceress	Luis Garcia	Luis Garcia
21	2/73	12	The Vampiress Stalks The Castle This Night	Felix Mas	Felix Mas

VAMPIRE TALES (MORBIUS tales denoted with *, HODIAH TWIST tale denoted with **)

2	10/73	11	The Blood Sacrifice Of Amanda Saint *	Rich Buckler	Pablo Marcos
2	10/73	11	The Praying Mantis Principle **	Rich Buckler	Klaus Janson & Carlos Garzon
3	2/74	12	Demon Fire *	Rich Buckler	Klaus Janson
3	2/74	9	Bat's Belfry (from the story by August Derleth)	Vincente Ibanez	Vincente
4	4/74	13	Lighthouse Of The Possessed *	Tom Sutton	Tom Sutton
5	6/74	14	Blood Tide *	Rich Buckler	Ernie Chan
7	10/74	18	Where Is Gallows Bend And What The Hell Am I Doing There? *	Tom Sutton	Tom Sutton
8	12/74	18	High Midnight * (one page reprinted from VT #7)	Mike Vosburg	Frank Chiarmonte

OF KINGS, KINGMAKERS AND PRETENDERS TO THE THRONE

BY PETER IRO

I first really started reading comic books in the early 60s, a hodgepodge assortment of Harvey funnybooks, war and superhero comics. My tastes developed fast and very soon the superhero books became standard fare for me.

Early favorites included JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, THE FLASH, and SUPERMAN. Marvel had yet to enter the field. Soon, the revived versions of GREEN LANTERN, THE ATOM, and HAWKMAN graced my slowly but surely growing pile of four-color fantasies.

Marvel wasn't too far behind, but I wasn't interested, even at the cajoling of a few kids who tried to convince me that the FANTASTIC FOUR were better than the JLA. Marvel simply didn't turn me on, having cheesy printing and artists who couldn't draw (even a critic then!). They simply couldn't compare to Infantino and/or Anderson (a.k.a. God).

Time passed, I grew a few inches, segue to the second half of the 60s.

Marvel had improved in the meantime and I did begin reading, tho' at first not buying, their books. Before long, sooner than you can say "It's Clobberin' Time!", I was hooked.

I was coming into the home stretch, adolescence just a stone's throw away.

I responded to something in the Marvels that the DCs lacked. As a youngster, I wasn't all that physical. I was chunky, read a lot, and was a *gulp* reasonably good student. My need to compete was satisfied with the Flash or Adam Strange or Hawkman. Fighting off an alien menace on the planet Rann in the Alpha Centauri solar system was certainly more exciting than playing "cops and robbers" and "war".

The pangs of growth became more apparant and suddenly everything was "kid stuff". Most of the kids who read comics quit reading them but a few of us, more withdrawn, less sure of ourselves, continued. Clandestinely, of course.

What was the charm the Marvel books had that kept me hooked?

I suppose it was really a reflection of where I was at as a person at that point in time. Wheras earlier I was content in purely selfish acts of self assurance, an increasing awareness, both conscious and unconscious, of my relationships with those around me, left me with many feelings of insecurity. Not on the primitive "he's stronger than I" level, but about life, where I was going.

Marvel must have appealed to me here.

In Marvel comics, everyone looked grim and angry, as if each character carried the responsibility of the world on their shoulders. Earth a speck in the cosmos against a firmament of explosions, grotesque creatures, evil machinations and ficticious kingdoms.

It was a world I could easily get into, if not identify with. Superman was never quite like this. The characters peopling these four-color pages had <u>real</u> problems...would Aunt May have a heart attack and die? Responsibility! A subconscious need for it, and the nerve had been struck. This was a whole new trip in comics, a departure from what I was used to as well.

Simultaneously, another phenomenum was occuring, albeit on a different front.

Comics virtually disappeared in the second half of the 50s. Parents had absconded with many a kids' collection of those vile threats to The American Way of Life and Things that were Normal and Decent. The DC stuff was really an attempt to recapture that lost and lucrative market which had been taken away. Marvel wanted to one-up DC at their own game...and succeeded. Until the 60s, comics were a pre-adolescent pastime, yet with the Marvels, something different began happening. The kids continued to read, some with greater regularity, through the critical stages of developement as individuals.

It was a symbiotic relationship: the readers getting off on the comics, and the comics in turn, gaining sales, rather than the usual turnover in readerships. With comic sales reaching new heights, display space once again became prominant. By the mid to late 60s, many of the former readers were in college, and with comics better displayed, perhaps a student here and there began noticing and even, with cheeks rosy with tell-tale embarrassment, picking up an occasional book or two. First, the titles they remembered that hadn't been cancelled,

and then, the newer ones.

Comics suddenly found a new, and unexpected audience. Partly nostalgia, partly camp, but comics had hit a nerve; a return to simpler days for some, but for others, also a reflection or more precisely a parallel of feelings and situations they could identify with. Remember now that this was the era of lengthening hair, peace rallies, protest marches, acid and Sgt. Pepper. The Hulk was definitely anti-establishment, Cap later began soul searching. But more important, the books were reflecting America in all her glory as well as her shame, Manifest Destiny, and whatnot.

Time would pass, and the gap between the two audiences would continue to narrow...

The prime perpetrators of the Marvel brand of comics were three fellows by the names of Stan Lee, Steve Ditko, and, oh yeah, Jack Kirby.

Until the 60s and Marvel, comics had been drawn based on a full script. Stan Lee had the idea and foresight (or perhaps it was a matter of economics) to let Kirby and Ditko do the storyboards, while he would just embellish it with a script. And it was somewhere along the line that the phrase "Kirby Magic" was coined. And it certainly was that.

Being one of the all-time naturals of comics, Kirby went at it, it would seem, with a vengeance, peopling his stories with interestingly cosmic characters and concepts in such rapid succession. He had adrenal glands working double shift, and it showed in his work. It became more and more a pure embodiment of sheer elemental force.

He had always been one of the mainstays of the field, one of its foremost hacks, if you will (and I don't necessarily mean that in a derogatory sense). Working in the field since its inception, he developed along with it, epitomizing it in a sense.

By the late 60s, the former giants of the industry had more or less disappeared. The Reed Crandalls, and the Will Eisners, Jack Coles, the Williamsons and Frazettas were working in other fields. The few that had remained were unknown historically, and were certainly not as good as at their peak periods.

So while Infantino and Anderson were winning the awards in the early 60s, Kirby just about developed an exclusive franchise on them in the following years. It was almost as if comics were invented in the 60s, and by Kirby at that. Perhaps more than any other individual, he defined the medium at this stage and date. He was, again, the epitome of comics at this time.

As Kirby became more and more the backbone of early Marvel, drawing several strips, doing the layouts for most of the others, getting into more creative control because of the (then) new approach to drawing and writing comics, his drawing took on more and more of a shorthand look.

Until this time, he had been a fairly orthodox artist (his work even had anatomy to it!), suffering through mostly bad inkers over the years: Joe Simon, himself, Dick Ayers, Don Heck, and eventually, Vince Colletta. His pencils could be moulded like any other artists'. One outstanding example was Wally Wood's dominant inks on THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN.

His new chores and situation changed all that. The circumstances afforded that all his work be more than ever, Jack Kirby, and because of this, a definite style came about. Foregoing the subtleties of expression which an occasional script may have added before, Kirby became more enamored with technology, telescoping

the grotesqueries of the Atlas days in this new environment, into a whole new mythology.

His work continued to take on more and more of a simplified, "shorthand" as I called it before, look as time went by. His squiggly highlight lines and "cosmic blots" were highly simplified versions of standard comic book art, gimmicks and cliches. It also allowed him the opportunity to amplify his work as never before so that instead of depicting, for example, realistic machinery, he would instead portray the essence of machinery. This ability to give the more powerful image, that of basic constructs allowed him to spotlight the feelings wanted, and simultaneously, draw the material quickly.

Further, the epithet of mythology has been foisted over most of his work in the last decade plus, more than likely because of his preoccupation with gods and myths. If one is to call his work a mythology, it is not because of such surface qualities, but because of its reflection of Kirby the person, and his attitudes; a reflection of his psyche that can be read from not what he consciously created but in how it relates to why he did it in the first place.

His preoccupation with the omnipotent father-figure, lack of mother-figure (or when there, secondary and relatively powerless), and females who are token romantic interests or essentially emasculated males in drag, somehow fit in much more comfortably, appealing to kids, not quite adolescent. I personally find the superhero genre to be a highly sexist one, from its origins to its sustaining factors. The genre has always been (with few exceptions) orientated towards young boys. Kirby was, in this respect, once again epitomizing comics, being as valid a barometer of the field as any.

While his creative spark and sense of "fun" were still there in '69, Kirby's artwork was already deteriorating; Sinnott's inks being the single most stablizing factor. Some of the deterioration had to do with a growing dissatisfaction creatively at Merry Ol' Marvel. Going over to National, his work, conceptually

J. Arcos
9-7-16

was as good as ever, but he couldn't sustain it for too long. His artwork was spirited at first as it hadn't been in years, but some of the consistantcy, the "starch", was gone. His writing quickly proved to be warmed over Lee at best, and somewhat embarrassingly, a script to a Japanese monster flick at its worst.

Kirby has always produced his best work in cooperation with someone else who maintained a reasonably strong identity, someone who provided a catalytic relationship to his creativity, or a highly interpretive one who could embellish with a script or inks or whatnot. In short, he has always worked best with another person who was able to funnel his enormous energies into a cohesive product.

Certainly Stan Lee was one (and the foremost at that). Joe Simon to a lesser degree, with Wally Wood and Joe Sinnott falling into this category as well.

Jolly Jack hasn't done anything drawingwise (and to a large extent crystalizing his visions) to match the level of his work in the late 60s. My impression is that he is now living on a reputation gained a decade ago, and that Rich Buckler does a better "Kirby" than Kirby now does (accepting the rationalization, of course, that by "Kirby", I refer to the artist at his peak). Kirby seems to have joined Dick Ayers, Don Heck and Vince Colletta in Hacks' Heaven.

One thing that has bothered me for a long time about Kirby is that he is to quite a degree a manufactured "legend". If you say he's great long enough, it's bound to catch on...you had to fill the Bullpen Page with something, and besides, it was good publicity. It wasn't without reason that DC referred to Marvel as "Brand I" in their letter columns. Maybe "the King" had something to do with it.

When he was still "Jolly Jack", Kirby wasn't necessarily any better or worse, but afterwards, the likelihood of criticism seems to have become non-existant. I've yet to read a real pan letter printed in the letter column of a Kirby associated title. Perhaps it's this lack of, and possibly defiance of, criticism that has stopped Kirby the artist from growing still.

Kirby's dynamism of a decade ago seems to be his own undoing today. We see a pale, carbon copy of his former self. Wheras theoretically an artist continues to grow and expand, Kirby doesn't and it seems he won't; a casualty of the inherent cannibalism of any commercially creative field. Even if he were performing at the level of a decade ago, other artists have surpassed him.

He's a cliche; stagnation in the worst possible way.

In myths, you can repackage an old idea in a new story. Kirby deals from himself really and in the span of a decade since his prime, he has begun to run out of ways to say the same thing over and over (this does not necessarily mean that the stories themselves are actually the same).

What will Kirby's role be in the future of comics? My guess is more a fading star and as a focal influence. As a metter of fact, I think Kirby's greatness will ultimately come, not in what he did specifically, but rather in how he influenced a medium at one stage in his and its careers.

What I'd like to see is a strong editorial influence on him, I'd opt for Archie Goodwin, who comprehends artists, creativity, individuality, yet also quality. I'd like to see Goodwin act as a catalyst for Kirby's work, as well as a heavy influence on the scripting, if not the actual scripting. Artwise, I'd like to see someone do to his pencils today, what Wally Wood did on the CHALLS almost two decades ago, or what Barry Smith did two months ago in the BICENTENNIAL BATTLES book. My candidate for this would be Tom Palmer. I would just love to see Kirby Machinery rendered in dry-brush and zipatone rather than those insipid squiggles. And faces, shading, weighting, dimension given their place in the artwork; subtleties which have one by one become steadily non-existant in Kirby's work.

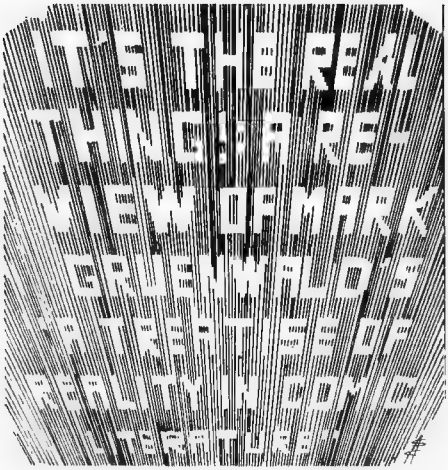
I sort of doubt it would happen because Tom Palmer would have to receive higher rates, considering the time he'd have to put into it, and Kirby probably wouldn't sit, or stand for it: he's got a contract. I'm curious how long his contract runs and what'll happen after that.

It's sort of strange saying this after the above, but I love Kirby's work. I have many fond memories of it, THOR in particular. Some of my frustrations with his work stems from the feeling that he did so much better at one time and I want to see circumstances where the finished product will have the quality his work did eight years ago. Yes, people change; we are in constant transition and perhaps this is not the answer. Maybe for some hardcore fans of his old work, new work along that line would be as sacreligious as the suggestion that someone doing the layouts for him.

I'd love to see an experimental strip or three with layouts by a Steranko (no first name these days) or a Gil Kane. Certainly, if Kirby can do layouts for other competant artists, it isn't a sin to have Kirby collaborate with someone else to come up with a synthesized product that has at least a chance of being different. One motivation for this suggestion is a curiosity in seeing just such a collaboration; the other being that perhaps approaching the drawing board differently after all these years might provide an insight, however slight, and a catalyst for something in his work as well as perhaps the chance to reassess himself as an artist, and give that potential spark a chance to come to life.

In ending, I think one factor in the deterioration of Kirby's work has been the lack of foresight and understanding of the creative processes on the part of the comic book companies.

Time will be the one to tell...



"A Treatise..." is an enlightening little book which may very well end up being a bible of sorts for the more spacey, science-fictional contingent of the comic book field, including fans and pros alike. In the introduction to his remarkable piece, Mark Gruenwald thus resumes its purpose:

> This paper will provide a detailed examination of the evolution of the Parallel Dimensions concept, and further, present a theory that binds all the varied and sometimes conflicting representations of Reality into a single, self-consistent system of universes. (1)

In other words, and as he goes on to explain later in the introduction, Gruenwald has put together an elaborate and cohesive scientific theory, developed to account for the oft-used and time-honored comic book device of parallel worlds/dimensions, as well as travel between these dimensions, and in time. The relationship between these two may seem a bit tenuous at first, as do many of the mathematical and physical postulates established within the first few sub-chapters of the book, but as the Treatise progresses, accumulating evidence, corollaries and case studies, the entire construct takes on an undeniable inner logic and verisimilitude which one is hard put to refute.

On one hand, it seems absurd to attempt to resume an entire scientific theory which takes a half-hundred double-spaced pages to explain, but on the other, this reviewer feels he should at least give a basic introduction to what shall no doubt come to be called the Gruenwald Reality Theory.

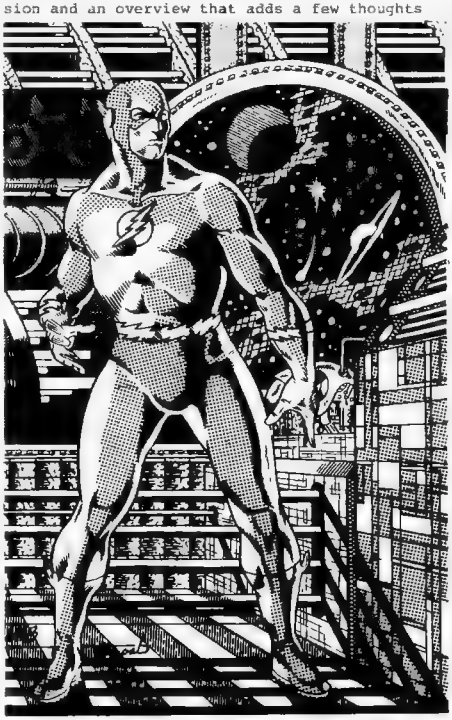
Gruenwald's basic assumption is that each different dimension, or "Reality Line", has a "vibration rate" applicable only to that one dimension. Also, "all matter vibrating at the same rate is tangible (real) only to other matter vibrating at the same rate" (2). Therefore, a number of different dimensions can coexist in the identical three-dimensional space while remaining "separate" and mutually intangible (e.g. DCs Earths 1,2,3...). Interdimensional "travel" consists of the attuning of one's bodily vibration rate to that of the dimension/parallel world/"Reality Line" to which one wishes to travel.

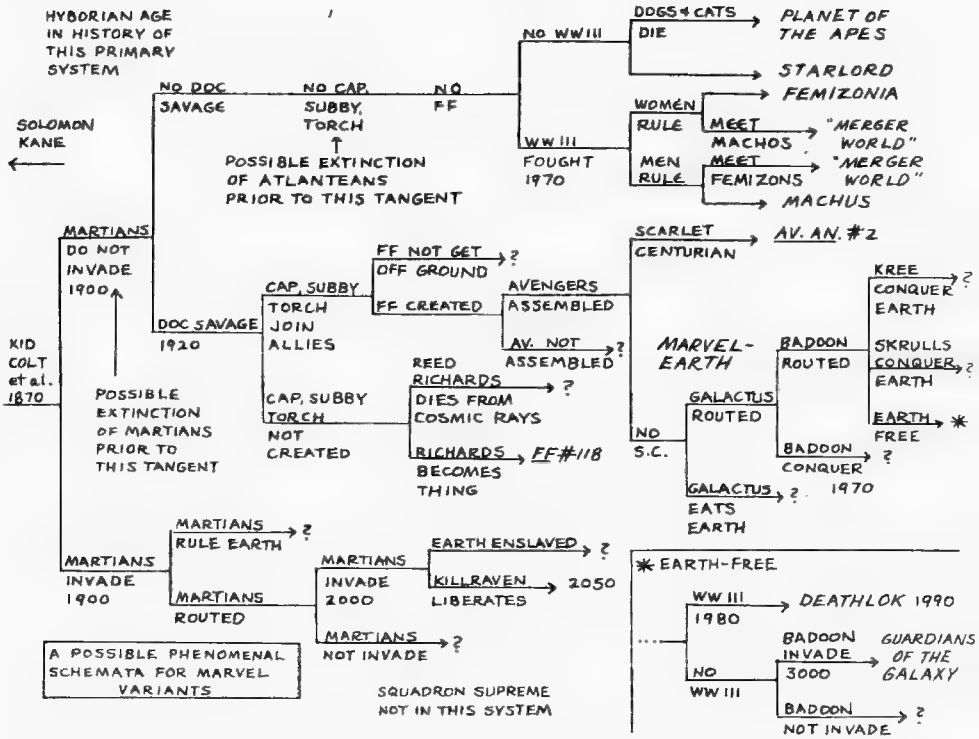
Parallel Worlds come into being when a so-called "Divergent factor" occurs. For example, a story which has a textbook-like clarity to it is "What Mad World" in FANTASTIC FOUR #118, in which writer Archie Goodwin introduced the world of "What if the Storm siblings hadn't taken that fateful flight along with Reed Richards and Ben Grimm?"; the divergent factor--i.e. the possibility of either combination of astronauts occuring--thus splits what was heretofore a single Reality Line with a single vibration rate into two different, and mutually intangible, Reality Lines with different vibration rates (also distinct from the original vibration rate, then referred to as "unactualized", contends Gruenwald, a slippery and disputable point which didn't quite convince your humble reviewer), each unaware of the other until somebody (in this case, Grimm and Lockjaw) transcends the vibrational barrier. (3)

On the subject of time travel, Gruenwald states there can be no paradoxes, simply because the appearance of a time traveller in the past merely creates a divergent Reality Line. Gruenwald easily kills the hoary old chestnut: "Killing One's grandfather would only produce a new Reality Line in which one has no dimensional counterpart. It will do nothing to affect one's reality, only one's conscience."(4)

Each of these chapters (Dimensions and Time) is followed by a number of "Case Studies", culled from both Marvel and DC, and are quite relaxing and clarifying after the heavier points made in the chapters proper; about two dozen books are studied in depth, with twice as many again being mentioned marginally.

The third and last chapter, The Omniverse (with sub-chapters Origin, Homogeneity, Afterlife, Time and Entropy) taking the broad approach, ties all the points together to the "single, self-consisent system of universes" mentioned in the introduction; it is a conclusion and an overview that adds a few thoughts





on theology, destiny and the like, as taken from the viewpoint of the Gruenwald Reality Theory.

Aside from the bulk of the text, there are numerous appendices. The book's biggest flaw is the lack of an index; after the first reading, one tends to know one's way around, but the missing index can be annoying, particularly when looking up case studies. However, the book does contain:

- no less than fifteen pages of footnotes, marginal musings, references and extrapolations that have no business within the bulk of the strictly scientific text.
- a glossary of about 35 words, evenly split between accepted terms (atomic instant, focal point) and neologisms coined by the author for his theory ("chronal displacement inertia" being one of the more interesting).
- a catalog of parallel earths (16), each characterized by one relevant factor, making them instantly recognizable.
- a catalog of counterparts (e.g. Mr. Fantastic and Reed-Thing, or Human Torch and Gaard).
- an extensive bibliography of about 100 comic books, and a half dozen others (5)
- two schemata of Reality Lines, one for each major company, plotting out the divergences and interrelationships between most of the known Parallel Worlds.

The book is very well researched and excellently written. Gruenwald has an obvious mastery of scientific writing, as well as a considerable amount of style which make for a text as pleasantly readable and clear as any of Asimov's Guides to Everything. He is obviously a fan, and while he doesn't allow his love for the medium--and its creators--to clog up the text, he doesn't either let his scientific approach repress the loving half-smile with which he treats some of the more entertainingly absurd aspects. Parts of the book are very funny, not in a joking manner, but with the wry humor spawned by research and the joy of discovery. His footnote referring to the SUPERMAN VS. SPIDER-MAN book reads, "Stories like this set back the layman's understanding of Reality many years" (6), and his well thought out classification of Cary Bates as a mutant is hilarious. (7)

If you've read this far, you know whether you want the book or not. I can only add that at an outrageously low price ($2.00 + $.50 postage and handling), the 88-paged "Treatise" is a steal when one considers the quality of the writing, the number of points made and the--let's be corny--hours of pleasure the mulling over and exploration of the theories can give the reader. I recommend this book as an invaluable guide to the separate realities of the Comic Book World, as a fascinating mathematical construct, as great mental exercise and as damn good reading. The ordering address is : 1260 Westhaven Drive, Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901.

FOOTNOTES:
(1) p. 1
(2) p. 12
(3) Actually, as witnessed in FF #s 160-163, the divergent factor happened to be "Johnny Storm killed in Viet-Nam", but this wasn't mentioned when Earth-F (Gruenwald's terminology) was introduced in FF #118.
(4) Pp. 81-82
(5) An addition from the reviewer: Gerrold's "Man Who Folded Himself" pretty much parallels Gruenwald's theory, and is an engrossing time travel book besides.
(6) p. 79
(7) p. 7

A Review by KIM THOMPSON

FEMINISM AND THE READY-MADE SUPERWOMAN

BY JO DUFFY

To begin with a digression, don't expect to read the word "heroine" in this article. It's a perjorative term: a heroine is a hero's girlfriend, after the fashion of Gwen Stacy and Lois Lane, and "superheroine" sounds like some kind of insidious, all addicting narcotic...

As long as there have been superheroes, and especially as long as there have been superhero teams, the female heroes have been tossed out and created anew whenever a writer decided that the woman herself or the team she belonged to was unsatisfactory or in need of change.

At National, the process of women-swapping goes back as far as the Justice Society, from the Golden Age. Its membership at one time included both Wonder Woman and the Black Canary, but if one woman was in active duty, the other was reduced merely to acting secretary. This tradition continued in the JSA's descendant, the Justice League. When Wonder Woman lost her powers and reverted to the identity of Diana Prince, she "left" the group. A non-super woman was not eligible for membership, although Batman, an ordinary man of extraordinary training, has never had any such problems. Black Canary was brought over from Earth-two to take the Amazon's place. Apparantly her presence in the book was reason enough for Wonder Woman's continued absence, because it wasn't until this year, long after Wonder Woman regained her powers, that she was able to rejoin.

A similar thing happened when the Batman line needed a new, Mod, shot-in-the-arm: enter the new, Mod, Batgirl, who was created with careless unconcern for the fact that there was already another, if admittedly awful, Batgirl in cold storage, as well as a Batwoman who had at one time been a semi-regular of the strip.

Marvel also embraced this process from the start. Every superteam created since the Lee/Kirby days has had its female member, and with a few recent, and commendable exceptions, those members have been thrown out and shuffled about with a regularity from which a pattern has emerged...when a woman becomes dull or difficult, throw her out and cure the team duldroms. No one seems to consider women worth the kind of character reform and developement that saved such male heroes as Green Arrow, Karate Kid and Nighthawk.

There was Susan Storm Richards, the Invisible Girl (one might think, by the way, that with a child of Franklin's age, she may be old enough to be considered a woman). Both the Human Torch and the Thing have frequently threatened to quit, but neither has ever gone any farther away than a super-powered sub-plot. Not so with Sue...when she goes, she's gone, appearing only rarely, and then in a civilian role. Motherhood, a marital spat, or an identity crisis...anything will do. And each time she'd been replaced with an alacrity that suggests no one missed her. Her successors, Medusa, Crystal and Thundra have been similarly dispatched when their time came.

With the early Avengers, the same pattern existed. They had their token woman, the Wasp, and when she left as part of a general team overhaul, the Scarlet Witch took her place. Here, though, things finally began to change. The Wasp reappeared without Wanda being phased out, and the Black Widow progressed from Hawkeye's love interest to a sort of special status Avenger.

Which brings us to the present. There are finally a number of team books with more than a token female member. The practice of tossing a woman out like an old shoe has more or less been abandoned. The treatment of women has entered a new stage, though not necessarily ideal. Now, after she has been scripted into an uninteresting corner, the writer comes up with a new, add-a-costume-and-serve, superwoman. For example: how long have we been waiting for the "Ms. Marvel" book, slated for an improved Jean Gray? Well, kiddies, Gerry Conway has thrown her off her own title, preferring to create a new, mega powered version of Captain Marvel's one-time romantic interest, Carol Danvers.

The most irritating of all the new ready made superwomen is that of the Valkyrie. This female Defender was created specifically as a feminist stereotype; in our own words, to "lay bare Man's foolish notion of superiority". A commendable idea in many respects and one that might have worked had Steve Gerber stayed on

that path as he brought some depth and life to her. However, Gerber has been using Val as counterpoint to the most successful of his long line of "me" figures, Jack Norris. Val is an independent and superpowered version of Jack's wife, Barbara, who left this sphere long ago in a state of mental illness. Despite Jack's constant insistance that Val is still his wife, Val has a completely different persona with none of Mr. Norris' feelings or memories. Her part in the strip has been reduced to a single function, that of illustrating a husband's confusion and tentative desire to understand the changes that a new consciousness has brought to his wife.

When Gerber needed, or wanted, to write about a freer, more dynamic woman, he left the Valkyrie in the trap she'd been written into and created a female version of the Red Guardian, Tania Belinsky. The Red Guardian is able to intereact with her fellow Defenders and perform aggresively without restraint. While I'm all in favor of increasing the number of superwomen, this was in many ways a cheap shot on Val. The fault, dear readers, is not in Val's stars, but in her scripter (this doesn't necessarily mean that Steve Gerber still isn't a nice guy, or that I consider most of his stories a pleasure to read...why just last month his elf shot a woman in the Ladies' Room -nearly always fatal- simultaneously crossing sex lines and making the elf an Equal Opportunity Killer).

Ironically, now that the Red Guardian has justified her existance and sparked a considerable interest by becoming the focus of an intriguing sub-plot, new scripter Gerry Conway (remember him from another paragraph?) has decided to drop her in favor of an atrocity called the Hellcat, the ultimate in ready-made women, a composite of two highly unsatisfactory components. In her civilian identity, she's Patsy Walker, a relic from a "Millie the Model"esque book called "Patsy and Heidi"; in her costumed identity, she has appropriated the powers and costume of the Cat.

The Cat, an identity originally held by Greer Nelson (currently Tigra, and currently unemployed) was created to cash in on the first wave of interest in feminists. Jules Feiffer, trying to verbalize his disatisfaction with the original Wonder Woman, explained that "It was too obvious that a bunch of men had gotten together in a smoke-filled room and brainstormed themselves a super-lady" (ed. note: see THE GREAT COMIC BOOK HEROES, page 45). His criticism could very aptly be applied to the Cat. She was too clearly an attempt to appeal to the feminist readers, or more precisely, the male readers interested in feminist characters (the distinction is subtle, but important). Instead of a person, the Cat was a phony, a representation of an imperfectly understood ideology. She was as close as Marvel could get to a female Spider-Man, their big money maker, without treading on the Black Widow's toes. Wisely, the identity was laid to rest.

It's possible that bringing her back was the only mistake Steve Englehart has ever made with a female character, but there is a kind of appealingly offbeat logic to wrapping that particular uniform around Patsy Walker. In any case, Englehart is one of the good guys. In addition to his scripting of Clea, Dr. Strange's ever-admirable disciple, he populated the Avengers with women who were a pleasure to read, if not always likeable; distinct individuals who inter-related instead of simply competing.

Chris Claremont is another of the good guys. While some might argue that Storm is one of the instant heroes I've been complaining about, I contend that the charge doesn't apply because she was created as part of an instant team, the all-new X-Men, and her characterization is flawless. Claremont portrays Storm as a dynamic and sensitive woman (ed. note: for those interested in Storm, check out Bob Rodi's piece on page 4). Equally important, Claremont has continued to develop and explore the two otherwise homeless X-Women, Lorna Dane and the much maligned Jean Gray.

There are other good guys, of course, and not all the bad guys wear their black hats all the time. Roy Thomas employed misogynistic satire in the creation of the Lady Liberators, and he's one of the scripters who booted the Invisible Girl out of the FANTASTIC FOUR (Conway was another), but he also "created" Red Sonja, bringing one of Robert E. Howard's Renaissance characters to the Conan legend. Sonja is a notoriously feminist Hyrkanian. Also, Belit, in the chapters Thomas added to "The Queen of the Black Coast" has been aggresive and interesting, if not actually loveable.

To give National their due, the Legion of Superheroes has always had quite a few girls in it, and their corollary, the Legion of Substitute Heroes, never restricted their female memberships. Before their title folded, the Teen Titans included two girls. Yet perhaps as in society itself, different rules apply to teenagers because for a long time, the trend stopped there.

But, however slightly, the times are changing and so is the industry's attitude toward women heroes. Every day, it seems another team has increased its female membership. All they have to do now is stop introducing new women as a way of announcing that the old ones are failures.

When the Women's Movement came in, a whole new set of women didn't materialize from somewhere. The old ones learned and grew.

Get the hint?

VICTORY IN "WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ATLANTIS?"

AN ELECTRICAL STORM OF SOME UNKNOWN ORIGIN WIPED OUT THE POWER ON VICTORY'S SPACE-SHIP, LEAVING HIM UNCONSCIOUS IN DEEP SPACE. UPON AWAKENING, HE FOUND THE SHIP STILL ON COURSE, AND NEAR TO THE DESTINATION TOWARDS WHICH HE HAD BEEN TRAVELLING: EARTH. VIC'S LANDING WAS TO BE AT THE SITE OF EARTH'S MIGHTIEST CITY: ATLANTIS! BUT TO HIS ASTONISHMENT, THE SHIP PLUNGED INTO THE OCEAN, AND AFTER LEAVING TO CHECK THE DAMAGE, VIC DISCOVERED THE GREAT CITY HAD SUNK!
NAB '76

WHEN I WAS LAST ON EARTH, ATLANTIS WAS A BUSTLING METROPOLIS— THE MOST ACTIVE AND ALIVE CITY IN THE GALAXY!
WHICH MEANS AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF TIME HAS PASSED IN THE INTERVAL. TIME FOR ATLANTIS TO BE PLUNGED INTO THE OCEAN— A CATACLYSMIC PHENOMENON WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN FORESHADOWED FOR CENTURIES.

ATLANTIS WAS ON A GREAT CONTINENT - AT A LEVEL FAR ABOVE THE SEA. FOR SUCH A DISASTER TO OCCUR, A LONG SHIFTING OF LAND MASSES WOULD HAVE BEEN NECESSARY.
I WAS IN CONTACT WITH THE CITY JUST BEFORE THE SPACE-STORM! SO I MUST HAVE BEEN ON A DRIFTING, POWERLESS SHIP FOR HUNDREDS, PERHAPS EVEN THOUSANDS OF YEARS. INCREDIBLE!
VIC IS LOST IN THOUGHT AS HE SWIMS THRU THE CITY, MORE PUZZLED THAN DISTURBED AT THE TURN OF EVENTS. SUDDENLY, HE SEES SOMETHING OUT OF THE CORNER OF HIS EYE - SOMETHING UNEXPECTED.
WHAT'S THIS ?!
HE HAS SEEN A LIGHT DEEP WITHIN A TEMPLE-LIKE EDIFICE.
AND YET A FURTHER MYSTERY!
COULD THERE BE LIFE HERE, EVEN NOW?
THIS IS ALL VERY STRANGE -- AND VERY CONVENIENT. I FEEL AS THO I WAS AWAKENED IN SPACE TO BE LEAD TO THIS VERY POINT.
FOR WHAT PURPOSE?
IF I AM A PAWN IN SOMEONE'S GAME, I MAY AS WELL PLAY IT OUT.
I WANT SOME ANSWERS, AND PERHAPS THIS IS WHERE THEY CAN BE FOUND.
2

SWIMMING INTO THE TEMPLE, VIC FINDS HIMSELF IN A HUGE INTERIOR COURTYARD. IT IS CIRCULAR IN SHAPE, AND SURROUNDED BY DOZENS OF SMALL CHAMBERS, ONE OF WHICH IS THE SOURCE OF THE LIGHT.
ODD THAT OF ALL THESE ROOMS- ONLY ONE IS LIGHTED.
ODDER THAT I SHOULD SEE IT ALMOST AS SOON AS I ENTERED THE CITY!
BY JUUPTOR!!
THAT TRAPPED BEING IS A TRIARK!
AS HE ENTERS THE CHAMBER, VICTORY'S REASONING PROCESS IS HALTED- THE SIGHT BEFORE HIM NOW IS THE MOST STUNNING YET... IN A STRANGE CELL OF SOME SORT, A FLOATING FIGURE.
THE TRIARKS- THREE KINGS OF THE DISTANT PLANET GALBAROK. WHAT IS ONE OF THEM DOING HERE- IMPRISONED ON EARTH IN A SUNKEN CITY?
I'VE GOT TO FREE HIM IF I CAN!
THE CELL IS FILLED WITH A LIQUID- OBVIOUSLY NOT WATER...
... BUT A TYPE WHICH INDUCES A SUSPENDED ANIMATION OF SORTS. THE INTERIOR PRESSURE IS EQUAL TO WHAT IT IS OUT HERE- ALL I HAVE TO DO IS BREAK THE GLASS!
SSSSH
DONE! NOW TO GET HIM OUT.
UNH... UNHH...
HE APPEARS TO BE REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS. I HOPE HE CAN STAND THE SHOCK.
3

IF HE WAS IMPRISONED AFTER ATLANTIS SANK, HE MAY KNOW WHAT HAPPENED. AH, HE'S COMING AROUND.
I'M OUT-FREED AT LAST! BUT, HOW IS IT I'M UNDER-WATER?
WHOEVER YOU ARE, I THANK YOU, BUT I DON'T...
GLANCING UP TO HIS LIBERATOR, THE TRIARK'S EXPRESSION NOW BECOMES ONE OF SHEER HATRED.
YOU... YOU'RE AN AGENT OF JUUPTOR!
YES, I AM. BUT WHY..
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'VE FREED ME, BUT I'VE SWORN A HOLY OATH TO DESTROY YOUR KIND!
AND SO I SHALL!
ZBATT
UNGH!!
THUS SPEAKS THE TRIARK— WHO SHALL AVENGE GALBAROK ON THE DAY HE SLAYS JUUPTOR HIMSELF!
THROWN INTO THE DARKENED COURTYARD BY THE FORCE OF THE BLOW, VIC RECOVERS QUICKLY.
HE HAS MORE STRENGTH THAN IS NATURAL FOR ONE OF HIS RACE— AND MEANS TO KILL ME!
TURNING AGAIN, VIC SWIMS OUT OF THE TEMPLE.
I'D BETTER AVOID FURTHER CONFLICT UNTIL I FIGURE OUT HOW TO HANDLE THIS.
I DON'T SEE HIM COMING AFTER ME— PERHAPS I HAVE AN ADVANTAGE IN SPEED.
AT ANY RATE, I'LL RETURN TO THE SHIP AND SEE IF I CAN GET IT TO OPERATE AGAIN.
4

SWIMMING UP AND OUT OF THE CITY, VICTORY EXAMINES HIS PECULIAR SITUATION...
BEFORE HE LOOKED AT ME, THE TRIARK SEEMED TO BE SURPRISED AT BEING UNDERWATER. EITHER HE WAS PLACED THERE BEFORE ATLANTIS SANK, OR WHOEVER IMPRISONED HIM BURIED HIM AFTER THE DISASTER.
BUT THAT SEEMS UNLIKELY...
WHAT WORRIES ME IS WHAT HE SAID ABOUT JUUPTOR. WHY DID HE SAY HE WOULD 'AVENGE GALBAROK' BY MURDERING HIM?
IS TRIARK MAD? DOES THIS SOMEHOW CONNECT WITH WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME?
AND WHY HAVEN'T I SENSED ANY ATTEMPTS AT CONTACTING ME FROM JUUPTOR SINCE I AWOKE IN OUTER SPACE?
VIC APPROACHES HIS SHIP, DAMAGED SLIGHTLY WHEN IT CRASHED INTO THE OCEAN, WHERE ATLANTIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE*
*SEE WOWSEKAZOWIE#1
INSIDE THE SHIP, VIC CLOSES THE AIRLOCK, WHICH PROTECTS THE MACHINERY.
I'D LIKE TO BRING THE SHIP TO THE SURFACE SO I CAN HAVE MORE OPTIONS ON HOW TO DEAL WITH THE TRIARK.
BUT THE DAMAGE IS GREATER THAN ANTICIPATED, AND...
WITHOUT EXTENSIVE REPAIRS, THIS SHIP IS GOING NOWHERE!
BAM! BAM!!
TRIARK'S FOUND THE SHIP!
BOOM!!
MOMENTS LATER, THE HULL OF A SPACESHIP DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND METEOR SWARMS COLLAPSES INWARD. THE TRIARK SWIMS THRU THE GAPING HOLE, BUT SEES HIS QUARRY HAS VANISHED!
KRAANG!!

THE TRIARK ASSUMES VIC HAS GONE TO THE SURFACE, AND SWIMS TOWARD IT, LEAVING THE RUINED HULK TO EXPLODE.
BUKAROOOM!!
BREAKING THE SURFACE, TRIARK SEES THE FIGURE OF VICTORY AGAINST THE SKY.
YOU CANNOT ESCAPE ME, JUUPTORIAN! YOUR MASTER FEARS ME - HOW CAN YOU HOPE TO SURVIVE MY ATTACK?
OH GREAT! HE CAN FLY TOO...
VIC TURNS AS THE TRIARK DELIVERS ANOTHER BLAST.
KRAK!
VIC RECOVERS MORE QUICKLY THAN EITHER EXPECTS.
IT'S THE WATER! OUT OF IT, HE'S STRONG, BUT BEATABLE- IT MUST SOMEHOW AMPLIFY HIS POWERS!
ENCOURAGED BY THE APPARENT REVERSAL OF THE ODDS IN HIS FAVOR, VICTORY COUNTER-ATTACKS!
WTAK!
AARRGH!
6

AS I THOUGHT- EVEN OUT OF THE WATER, HE'S GOING TO BE TOUGH TO BEAT! HE TOOK A SOLID PUNCH AND SHRUGGED IT OFF.
I WARN YOU, TRIARK- YOU FIGHT VICTORY...
... AND I AM TRUE TO MY NAME!
BLAM
HE RESISTS PHYSICAL ASSAULT- GOT TO USE MY EYE-BEAMS!
A POWERFUL BOLT OF ENERGY! YOU ARE INDEED A FORMIDABLE OPPONENT- BUT I SHALL WIN - FOR GALBAROK!

SUDDENLY, THE TRIARK SIMPLY DROPS - TOWARD A NEARBY ISLAND.
THE EYE-BEAMS DIDN'T KNOCK HIM OUT...
IT MAY HAVE BEEN A RESULT OF BEING OUT OF THE WATER...

NEXT: SOME ANSWERS, AND AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE ORIGIN OF THE TRIARK!

WOWEEKAZOWIE! LETTERS

Well, here we are with our first lettercol! We received a number of interesting notes, and would like to thank everyone who thought enough of our first issue to drop us a line. Without further ado, your letters...

****

Willie-

I have just finished WOWEEKAZOWIE! #1 and really enjoyed it. I agreed with most of Bob Rodi's opinions on the DC Revival Craze, especially in regards to the Doom Patrol, one of my favorites. The debate over the Hulk-Thing battles was engaging, and presented the opinions of many fans, I believe. Dean gave us an intriguing article, and I look forward to more of Victory.

Don Greene

(Thanks, Don. The folks who wrote in liked Vic, and so we'll be keeping him in WOWEE for most issues. -WAB)

Willie-

WOWEEKAZOWIE! is the best fanzine I've seen all year. The real winner in this issue was Kim Thompson and his top-notch interpretation and comparison of the Spirit and the Man-Thing in 'The Background Heroes.' I commend Kim, and hope to see more Thompson articles in the future.

Dave McDonnell

(Dave went on to rave about everything in the book. Response to Kim's article was mixed; I personally felt it was the best written fan article I've ever seen. And I want to thank Dave here for his plug of WOWEE in his "Media Report" in TBG. -WAB)

Willie-

Enjoyed WOWEEKAZOWIE! #1 very much. So much so that $2 is enclosed for the next three issues.

Ron Misenhimer

(Higher praise we couldn't ask for! -WAB)

Willie-

I've seen other 'zines which claim to be FAN-zines, but they have pro work in them. Now, I respect the pros, but I really like real fan zines! You did an excellent job on Victory and so did Pete on Savior

Reuben Pharms Jr.

(Thanks, Reuben. I agree with your evaluation of Pete Iro--he's one of the best. -WAB)

Willie-

The Savior was so good I can't believe you wrote it. I don't mean I didn't think you could write, I just didn't know you could write stuff like this! Savior is movie material!

Tim Corrigan

(Tim has a way with words. Actually, it's a big deal for me to get this kind of compliment from a guy I consider to be the best all around writer/artist in Fandom. And I couldn't get thru this column without plugging his TIM CORRIGAN'S SUPERHERO COMICS. His ads are always in TBG, and his work is always first-rate. -WAB)

Willie-

Your strip, Victory, was by far the best artwise and storywise!! I can't wait for the next issue!

John Beatty

(Eat your heart out, Pete! Thanks, John, and I just hope you like this ish as much as you enjoyed the first one -WAB)

Willie-

I expected to get a fairly well put together mag--but what do I get instead? A masterpiece! This is the zine of all zines!

Mark Pacella

(Mark included some masterful sketches in his letter, and will hopefully be represented in these pages from now on. -WAB)

Willie-

The idea of rotating editors should keep fresh ideas coming out issue after issue. Squeezebox Serenade has the potential to be very good as I found the second half of the article very interesting, where KJ goes after particular books.

Fred Milano

(Most of the folks who wrote in commented that they liked KJ's outspoken style. No Squeezebox this time, but maybe in the future. -WAB)

Willie-

I must say you've got a pretty decent zine going. I love your art! I would like to know if the cover for #1 is for sale.

Dave Friedlander

(Well, Dave was one of several folks who were interested in buying that cover. We have no set policy as a group about selling artwork which appears in WOWEE--each artist has his own opinions on that. My own feeling is that I'd rather not sell art done for zines. -WAB)

Willie-

You could say that WOWEEKAZOWIE! was a nice kick in the ass for me. It has restored that ol' "sense of wonder" about comics and Fandom which was forgotten. It certainly had enough of the fannish feel.

John Mozzer

(John is a good friend, and it's nice to have his support. We wanted to recapture that feeling Fandom had a few years back but has lost to an unfortunately slicker look today. -WAB)

Willie-

I enjoyed your artwork, especially the Simonesque illoes. Savior displayed Pete's talents nicely...

Bill Mutschler

(Bill puts out a nice zine called GRAPHEX- his address is: 500 Crestview Rd., Wayne, PA. 19087 Good feeling to have other fanzine folks telling us we're doing a good job. Thanks, Bill.-WAB)

Willie-

Duck Rogers should have been a strip!

Michael McCloud

(Mike and several others were kind of indignant that there was no Duck Rogers strip. I wouldn't want to do one anyway, but if I did, I'd get sued by Marvel--whadaya want?! -WAB)

Willie-

I enjoyed all the articles but hope there will not be any more Howard the Duck for awhile, anyway. Every fanzine you pick up has Howard in it!

Glen Eberts

(I'm with you, Glen! I might add that if we could do strips about established characters, I'd be doing Subby in every issue. -WAB)

Willie-

WOWEEKAZOWIE!! It was great! Especially the two strips!

Don Fortenberry

(Only one strip this time, but more in future issues--including one by Kim and myself--tentatively planned for #4, to be edited by Kim from far-away Europe! -WAB)

****

I know, this all sounds like so much pure egoboo but to tell the truth, we received not a single negative letter. I want to thank all once more and also apologize for trimming many comments. Several of the letters would have taken up a whole column, and so I opted for a Murray Boltinoffish type of column. Well that's it. Don't forget: all comments on this issue, send to Dean.

WOWEEKAZOWIE!!
$1.00
#2
ARO